also by Nik Cohn

Market
I am still the Greatest, Says Johnny Angelo
Pop from the Beginning
Arfur

Today there are no Gentlemen

The Changes in Englishmen's Clothes since the War

NIK COHN

WEIDENFELD AND NICOLSON
5 Winsley Street London W1

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For McTavish

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Introduction

Before I launch myself into narratives, I should explain what this book is about, and equally what it isn't about.

What it *is* about, quite simply, is Englishmen's clothes, and the way that these have changed since the Second World War, and the reasons for these changes; what it *isn't* about, or not especially, is high camp fashion.

In other words, it is concerned with clothes at every level. It deals with Carnaby Street and Kings Road, of course, but also with Savile Row and Jermyn Street, and with the High Street; and with Cecil Gee's American Look of the forties, and the Italian Look of the fifties, and the upper-class Dandy revival of the early sixties; and with Teddy Boys, Mods and Rockers, Hippies and Skinheads; and with Hardy Amies and Michael Fish, John Michael Ingram and Mr Freedom, and then again with Burtons and Hepworths; and also with the way that all of them have been affected from outside, by developments in France, in Italy and in America. Just about equally, it involves the people who have designed clothes, the people who have sold them and the people who have worn them.

Straightaway the question arises: does it matter? Does it really make any odds what men wear, whether they are sexual or shapeless, glossy or plain? In the end, isn't it a sign of direst decadence that men should even think of such things, let alone write books on them?

On those terms, the answer must be dismissive; no, it doesn't matter in the least; yes, it is ludicrous the way that the trend-besotted male has come to primp and preen himself; and yes, the fanatic following of fashion is amongst the most tedious disciplines possible.

But clothes exist at another level, beyond fashion. Even if they are trivial in themselves, they are not meaningless. More than any other area of taste, they are statements – complex expressions of self-image, of how one sees oneself and what one hopes for. However one dresses, it carries one's own dreams of oneself and this applies just as much to dowdiness as to peacockery.

Therefore, any period of innovation in dress can only come out of major upheavals in the way that people picture themselves. And by tracing exactly what has changed and what hasn't in men's clothes since the war, I have hoped to produce a footnote on what has and hasn't changed in Englishmen generally.

I must say right at the outset that these sartorial upheavals have been nothing like as dramatic as the media would have had one believe and that anyone hoping for tales of millennium may as well stop reading now. It is true that, during these last years, the fashion pages have been glutted with stories of Revolution and Peacock Renaissance, but fashion pages deal only with the tiniest of trendy minorities, they have no relevance to England as a whole. Away from Chelsea and Kensington, on the streets of Manchester or Glasgow or Leeds, the move towards peacockery has been slow and scattered, often to the point of near invisibility.

As Eric Joy, the tailor, puts it: 'When I first started cutting, in the early fifties, my biggest seller was the single-breasted, button-three in grey or dark blue; ten years later, it was the same; today it's the same; in 1980, it'll still be the same.'

The simple truth is that two-thirds of all men's suits are sold by the three mammoth multiple tailors: Burton, Hepworths and Associated Tailors (Neville Reed and John Temple), and that a large slice of the remainder is swallowed up by other firms along the same lines, like Hornes and Alexandres, John Collier and Dunns. At a liberal estimate, high fashion may account for 5 per cent of the whole menswear market.

I don't think, however, that that makes my book meaningless: even if there's been no earthquake yet, there have been

enough tremors to be worth thinking about. In the place of revolution, there has been instead a complex graph of breakthrough and backsliding, small liberations and reversals, stretching back to 1945 and only now beginning to achieve any kind of concerted forward impetus. So far, progression has been confined to high fashion but in the last couple of years, it has spread at last to the mass market. One by one, the giant manufacturers have begun to rethink their positions and make first tentative advances. Even Burton, vastest and dreariest unit in the whole industry, have started to revamp themselves.

With this, all the bleatings of revolution may begin to take on meaning. For the first time, male fashion won't be just the rich and the chic, sipping Campari sodas at the Arethusa; it will be dealing in millions.

On that basis, this book comes more into perspective. It isn't about a movement but about the roots of a movement; not about change but about the precursors of change. Simply, it's about a beginning.

I would also like, as preamble, to make a few excuses and/or justifications.

One: I have written mostly about London, simply because all the major innovations have happened there and the provinces have then picked them up, one or five or even ten years later. To put it crudely, clothes *are* London – even Liverpool in the early sixties, when the Beatles were emerging and the city had become the centre of world teenage myth, used clothes that had already passed out of fashion in London. Therefore, I have written about non-London developments in general terms but, to avoid repetition, I haven't dealt specifically with, say, Leeds, or Glasgow, or Cardiff.

Two: some of the people that I've interviewed, by reason of either wealth or fame, are untypical of what happens nationally. This is not élitism on my part – I have included them because they have been first with styles or attitudes which have later caught on generally, and roughly the same

applies to my chapters on teenage cults, and to my emphasis on youth altogether.

And three: I should emphasize once again that this is a book about clothes, as opposed to glossy-mag fashion, and for this reason I have not attempted to list every single style that's been popular. To do so would have destroyed any possible flow that my book might achieve and would have added nothing beyond a kind of dogged completeness. As it happens, the vast majority of successful fashions have fitted into my narrative naturally; but there are omissions.

I

Before the War

Modern English menswear began with Beau Brummell. That's a most sweeping generalization, of course, but essentially true just the same and, if one is going to understand what has happened to men's clothes since, one must understand first what Brummell really meant.

His image has always been one of wild flamboyance, all frills and fripperies – the archetypal peacock, in fact, forever preening. But he wasn't really like that, not at all. Instead, he was a satorial puritan, who believed that the elegant man should be virtually invisible: 'If John Bull turns round to look after you, you are not well dressed,' he said, 'but either too stiff, too tight or too fashionable.'

Brummell has been misunderstood, basically, because the word *dandyism,* with which he is associated, has taken on a totally false meaning. Popularly, it is supposed to mean display, exhibitionism; but, in fact, it only means perfectionism. Dandies take care – they do not make gestures.

It's an understandable confusion. When one looks now at a picture of Brummell, he looks extremely flash. But in his own time, his dandyism was a stern reaction against the beaux and macaronis of the eighteenth century, who had been foppish beyond all bounds. By their standards, Brummell produced a style of such severity as to amount almost to renunciation and, during his years of pre-eminence (1799-1810) he set standards that remained unchallenged for almost a hundred and fifty years. These standards were neatness, simplicity and, at all times, correctness.

But there was one great difference between Brummell and the generations that followed him – Brummell himself was obsessive. He may have believed in discretion; he also

believed, most passionately, in taking pains, in working on each and every detail until it was faultless, even if that meant trying and discarding twenty cravats each morning.

In this, his successors abandoned him – they kept his taste for reticence but lost his love for dress itself. Over the years, they became not merely diffident but actively hostile, until the tradition was established that it was undignified to care for clothes and downright caddish to innovate.

The central reason for this was that, in all the years of Brummell's dominance, male dress was ruled by what James Laver* has called the patriarchal principle. In other words, young men copied their fathers. They did not rebel, or create fresh standards for themselves. As far as possible they preserved their fathers' values, both morally and in their tastes, and this meant, right up until 1939, that they tried to be gentlemen.

Throughout the Victorian age, and for several decades after, this counted above all – not to be beautiful or funny or bright, original or sexual, but simply to play by the rules. Just so long as you behaved yourself, you passed.

Naturally, this expressed itself in clothes. Unlike almost every other period of history, dress was not used to attract or intrigue, it did not say *I am a man*; it said *I am a gentleman.*

In such an atmosphere, it was obvious that deviations must be frowned upon and, from generation to generation, respectable male costume became more and more restricted in scope.

Victorian men were still permitted a certain range. Figures like Joseph Chamberlain and Lord Randolph Churchill were genuine dandies, formal but given to elaborate footwear and cravats, and there was a distinct resurgence in the 1880s, with brighter colours and loud-patterned tweeds. However, these were reserved for country wear; in town, gentlemen remained cautious though spruce.

After the turn of the century, even mild experiment became

* For anyone wanting to know more about the history and theory of fashion, Laver's books are quite invaluable. Especially relevant, in the present context, is *Dandies* (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1968).

taboo. Victorian elegance, expressed in frockcoats, cravats and buttoned boots, gave way to shapelessness. Style, cut and fabric became standardized, all clothes swallowed up in a blanketing greyness and, by the thirties, the slightest hint of dressiness was enough to make one suspect.

Winston Churchill was a good example of this. In his youth, he'd been distinctly dandified and, though he lost this early dedication, he remained original all his life, what with his siren suits and his Pickwick hats, his fur-trimmed duffel coats. He was scarcely an exquisite but he was odd and, until 1940, he was much disliked for it. Of course, he was disliked and distrusted for other reasons as well, but still, in Chips Channon's* diaries, his sartorial aberrations are brought up among the clinching points against him.

Behind all this, there lay fear of the flesh, and that is where the greatest difference lay between Brummell and his descendants: his own style had been based on narcissism; the Victorians thought the body shameful. More and more, clothes were used for disguise, to camouflage whatever shape or sexuality one might possess. In particular, they were made baggy. Jackets hung off one in drapes, trousers formed elephant folds underneath the arse.

This doesn't mean, however, that clothes were unimportant. On the contrary, they meant a very great deal, probably more than they do today. Exactly because the scope for self-expression was so small, every detail became all-revealing.

In the seventies, so many people dress up that the signals have been blurred. When someone makes his entrance in a frilly shirt or tight pants, it may mean almost anything. But in the decades of the purge, you could tell a man precisely by the style of his boots, the collar of his shirt – his social background, his temperament, his ambitions. If you asked

* For many years Conservative Member of Parliament for Southend and, more notably, one of the last great London hosts and intriguers. American by birth, he learned to do a better impersonation of the English aristocrat–snob than any Englishman of his time and his diaries (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1967) are definitive of 'smart' pre-war attitudes.

him the name of his tailor, that was just about the furthest-reaching compliment you could pay him.

Perhaps that sounds like exaggeration. But one need only read Anthony Powell's *Music of Time* novels to see how crucial clothes were. Apart from their qualities as fiction, these books are definite accounts of middle-class, upper-class and bohemian life between the wars and, in them, description of dress is one of the main ways of conveying character.

The severity is frightening. Personality hangs on the pattern of a tie or width of a trouser-leg and Peter Templer, one of the central protagonists, is damned repeatedly because 'there was always a slight impression that he was too well dressed'.

Too well dressed, that catches it exactly. One must be correct, yes, but the correctness must be instinctive, inbred. One must not try, because effort was common. In fact, one must go to the other extreme, make efforts to be anti-effort. If one bought a new suit, it must not look new; if its creases hung sharp as a knife, one must scruff them up a bit, or else be thought a parvenu: 'Very spruce,' said *The Times* of Rex Harrison, and meant it as a put-down.

The truth, therefore, is not that clothes were irrelevant, merely that their relevance was expressed in different terms. Before Beau Brummell, they were judged by visual impact – if they looked good, they were good. But now they were valued first for their propriety and, second, for their quality of make. Aesthetics didn't come into it; what counted was wear and workmanship.

Inevitably, in every generation, a few exceptions would appear, eccentrics who used their clothes for self-expression, and they fitted in three main categories: dandies, aesthetes and bohemians.

Of these, the dandies were the most powerful socially. They were gentlemen by birth and not anarchic by temperament. In most cases, they were heterosexuals. Often their interest in dress would be their only quirk and, for this, they might be distrusted but they weren't ostracized completely.

In the true Brummell tradition, they did not dress for outrage but took pains to be immaculate and tended to gaze into mirrors. Sometimes they would make innovations and, if they were famous in their careers, their styles might catch on widely. Joseph Chamberlain, for example, introduced the loose tie enclosed by a ring, and it was fashionable for a decade.

Among the most fanatical and admired of dandies were the novelist Bulwer, the Count d'Orsay and Disraeli, at least in his youth; but none of them was nearly as influential as Edward VII and his grandson, Edward VIII. The Edwards were not pure dandies, in the sense that they didn't devote their whole lives to it, but, by contemporary standards, they tried quite hard and were imaginative and started new styles. And, unlike the rest, their scope stretched beyond the rich and fashionable.

As royalty, they were copied everywhere. Whatever they wore, it would be taken up by Savile Row and then by the stores and the whole mass market, so that their reflections carried right through the middle class and even into the working class, normally too busy surviving to give fashion a thought.

Both of them were absolute arbiters of male costume in their own period, not only in England but around Europe as well and, in Edward VIII's case, in America, and it was largely because of them that the Englishman acquired an international reputation, quite undeserved, as the epitome of good dress-sense.

Edward VII was responsible for introducing the Homburg hat to England. He also popularized the double-breasted jacket, the bowler hat, creased trousers and, of course, the Prince of Wales check.

Even so, he was surpassed by his grandson. Throughout the twenties and thirties, while still the Prince of Wales, Edward Windsor started one fashion after another – Fair Isle sweaters, wide-knotted ties, white waistcoats worn with dinner suits, American slimmer-cut trousers – and he wore them all with most perfect elegance. He was fastidious with-

out narcissism, formal without stuffiness. Almost single-handed, he brought back distinction into English menswear, just as it was touching rock bottom, and nobody since has equalled him, not nearly.

The aesthetes were something quite different. Unlike dandies, they were a conscious attempt to be separate from the mainstream of society, which they saw as philistine and cack-handed, and their major weapon was shock. Very often homosexual, they went in for elaborate affectations of gesture, voice and dress. Physical beauty and exoticism, the minutiae of style – these things were turned into fetishes and wit was made everything, boredom the only sin.

In practice, this led to a very great deal of snobbery and preciousness. Nevertheless there were compensations – for many decades the aesthetes alone brought instinct and daring to their clothes, and used fabrics like silk or velvet, and brighter colours and more flowing shapes.

They had their heyday in the 1880s, with Oscar Wilde, brocade waistcoats and silver-topped canes. Thereafter, they survived most strongly at Oxford and Cambridge, especially in the 1920s. Evelyn Waugh deals with them in *Brideshead Revisited* and Sebastian Flyte, his beautiful doomed hero, makes his first entrance in dove-grey flannels, white *crêpe de chine* and a Charvet tie with a postage-stamp pattern.

From Cambridge, during the early twenties, there emerged Cecil Beaton, the photographer, designer, writer and designator of what is good taste and what isn't, and he became the great aesthetic dresser, as Edward Windsor became the great aristocratic dresser.

In his undergraduate days Beaton was a bounder, the kind that got thrown into fountains or debagged by rugger players. He wore red ties, golden jackets and, like Flyte, dove-grey flannels. His suits were cut close in the sleeve, so that they fitted him tight at the cuff and at the armpit, instead of flapping like tarpaulins and, for this alone, he was jeered and hooted through the streets of Cambridge.

Even when he'd come down and been successful, he was still thought scandalous. And it is true, perhaps, that he had

his extravagant moments. Early in the thirties, for instance, he developed a fondness for the Tyrol and was to be seen in peasant blouses and lederhosen.

But that was for country wear. In London, Beaton wore suits, just like everyone else, except that they fitted. 'It wasn't so much the actual clothes,' says Norman Parkinson, the photographer. 'It was his attitude – you could see that he took trouble and was aware of how he looked, and people hated this.'

The turning point came in the mid-thirties, when first Edward VIII and Mrs Simpson, and then George VI and Queen Elizabeth asked him to take their photographs. At first, this move was much criticized and Beaton was more disliked than ever. But as time went on and he survived, he became half-accepted. He wasn't a gentleman, of course, and never would be; but he wasn't thrown into any more ponds. After the war, he became almost an institution – perennial symbol of Fashion, and of the fashionable world.

He was, and is, a pathfinder. In certain circles it is fashionable now to dismiss him as a sycophant, merely a trend-setter, but his clothes disprove this. He was almost the first person to wear whatever he wished, regardless of the reaction, and it must have taken him courage and stubbornness. 'Did his own thing, didn't he?' as David Bailey put its, and that is why, in the sixties, when smart London began to dress up, Beaton was adopted as something of a father-figure.

As for the bohemians, they were also cut off from the mainstream but in a very different way. With aesthetes, the vision was one of delirious decadence. The basic bohemian fantasy, however, was of the starving artist in the garret, pouring out his soul through his art. Either that, or the revolutionary in the cellar, scribbling pamphlets and making home-made bombs.

Clearly, this was serious stuff and dressing up would have been out of place, an unthinkable frivolity. So, while the aesthetes tried to be exquisite, bohemians went straight to the other extreme and aimed for shabbiness. With great determination, they cultivated squalor and a style of anti-

dress: beards and sandals, dirty fingernails, patched and baggy trousers.

With all their differences of approach, the two movements – aesthetic and bohemian – had a lot in common. In both cases, they were attempts to rebuff the conformity of the centre; in both cases, they expressed this by discarding the standard uniform; and in both cases, they immediately replaced one uniform with another, just as rigid.

This always happens, of course. Since clothes are statements, and only an infinitesimal number of people make statements that are original, it's inevitable that all dress, however anarchic in intent, should slip into comfortable patterns. And then, also, clothes are crude – much less subtle or flexible than words – and their messages can't be complex. All that is possible is to use them as a summary: a comic-strip bubble, a slogan.

In that sense, therefore, neither the aesthetes nor the bohemians were less standardized than their enemies. What was new about them, though, was the way they used their clothes as gestures. While everyone else was dressing to hide, saying *I am the same*, they dressed to be stared at, to proclaim *I am strange, I am different.*

Of course, this is exactly the attitude that sustains fashion now, in 1971, and the reason, precisely, is that the two traditions have become increasingly intertwined since the war; aestheticism meshed inextricably with bohemianism, thereby creating a two-horned monster.

Until 1939, both movements remained quite small. Between them, they can't have amounted to more than a few thousands. Still, they were a beginning and, during the thirties they produced a gathering impetus.

Already, in the twenties, there had been warnings. In particular, there had been the fad for Oxford Bags, trousers like tents, which was the first instance of the young breaking away from adult dress, and there had also been fashions for suede shoes, coloured ties, sporty blazers. Now the movement towards adventure was taken further still.

By present-day standards, it was still nothing very sensational; but there were definite signposts. A few students took to wearing coloured shirts, a few Etonians revived the Edwardian fancy waistcoat, and a few Soho queens grew their hair down to their shoulders.

It wasn't always easy going. In 1933, my father, a comely youth with an Oxford accent, was turned away from Lyons Corner House in Coventry Street for wearing a dark green shirt and sandals. 'We don't want your kind here,' the doorman said, and my father departed, a martyr forever.

Even more momentous, a couple of years later, Norman Parkinson was seen to wear a blood-red Harris tweed maxicoat, ankle-length and shaggy, and smelling strongly of sheep's piss. At the time, it made him a laughing-stock; in retrospect, it seems heroic.

The point about Parkinson, the thing that made him intriguing, was that he was neither queer nor a starving artist. He had been to Westminster, sported a formidable military moustache and spoke very proper indeed. Without the blood-red maxicoat, he might have passed for an Indian Army officer, and yet here he was in fancy dress, prancing about Mayfair and taking snaps for his living. For someone of his background, it was a startling development, something that would scarcely have happened even ten years before.

In retrospect, it isn't quite so hard to understand, this trend towards oddity. Always, change in dress is a reflection of a change in society as a whole and, during the thirties, such change was considerable.

The First World War had undermined the rigid Victorian structure, by which the upper class had been top, the middle class lower and the working class nowhere, with any adjustment almost impossible. But no new patterns had yet replaced the old, no fresh certainties. For the moment, all things were uneasy. The Depression, the Spanish Civil War, the approaching world war – everything added to the sense of general muddle, of one age coming to a close without a new one ready to take its place. Inevitably, the confusion showed in clothes.

Even so, one mustn't exaggerate. If there was a move to-

wards liberation, it was still extremely tentative and involved the tiniest of minorities: a scattering of younger sons, queers and artists.

And that, finally, is the most basic point to be made about all male fashion before the war, that it was confined to an upper-class élite. Below that, fashion didn't exist – only clothes.

The bulk of the menswear trade was made up of a few giant multiple tailors, like Montague Burton and Hepworths, and a few equally giant general-clothing chains, like Marks & Spencer. Up in the north, in Yorkshire or Lancashire, their factories looked like prisons and dandyism didn't come into this, or aestheticism. It was simply an industry, and profit was its dominant value.

Often, the chains were not started or built up by Englishmen. 'Marginal operators, meaning Jewish immigrants,' says Peter Gorb, now commercial director of the Burton group. 'Coming from outside, they could see what Englishmen were all about, namely snobbery. Everyone wanted to look like a gentleman.'

To this end, the multiple tailors produced a basic Englishman's suit, which was dark grey and shapeless but respectable. It wasn't glamorous; it obeyed the rules. 'The Englishman was always scared,' says Gorb. 'When he went to buy a suit, his approach was purely negative. He didn't want to look conspicuous or exciting; he just wanted not to look silly and, with the multiples, he felt he could trust them.'

From the snob angle, the multiples had one great advantage in that their suits were made to measure, thus giving the customer all the vanities of bespoke tailoring without the bespoke prices. In addition, they wore well and were symbolic of common sense. 'When you bought a Burtons' suit,' says Gorb, 'you were saying, basically, *I am an ordinary man* and that's what most Englishmen really wanted.'

Visually, the different firms were almost undistinguishable. Wherever there was unusual dynamism, as with Montague Burton himself, it would show itself within the business, in lower prices or improved customer service; but when you

walked down the High Street, all the windows would look alike, a uniform greyness.

There were no alternatives. Until after the war, Englishmen wore uniform – it was as simple as that. Almost without exception, in every class and age group, they turned out as Gentlemen. No matter how poor they were, or how rough their work, when they put on their suits, they dressed to be polite.

Even if they had wished to break out, which they didn't, they couldn't have afforded it. For the overwhelming majority, there was no spare money and, anyhow, there were no shops to spend it in. It hadn't yet become chic for fashionable tailors or designers to play with the multitudes, and adventurous clothes simply weren't available. The field was left entirely to the multiples and, unchallenged, they churned out the same old stuff endlessly, grey suits and white shirts, year after year without change. Nobody cared and nobody tried: until 1939 men wore whatever they were given and what they were given was anonymity.

2

The Beginning: Cecil Gee and the Charing Cross Road

By now, it has become almost impossible to write about the war and its effects without sinking neck-deep in platitudes. The ground has been covered so often and so thoroughly already, and the conclusions to be drawn are so clear-cut – I can see no way in which to be original.

Crudely, the point is this, that the revival in menswear sprang out of the war and that it happened because the war had given society a whole new mobility. Once and for all, it had smashed the assumption that a man must stay forever in the class to which he was born; from now on, there was flexibility.

I'm not saying that the class system was killed off completely, or even that it ceased to matter. But it was at least loosened, especially among the young and, out of this relaxation, there came in time a series of explosions, in music, in language and in dress – Pop culture.

As I have said, this process had begun in the thirties, but only as a trickle. It took the war to open the floodgates and, when peace returned, the age of the gentleman had been lost for good.

Naturally, all this was not obvious straightaway. Immediately after the war, the feeling was not so much of revolution as of frustration, a hopeless rage at the way things were. Young men were getting demobbed and resuming their former lives and hating them. They had wasted six years, a great chunk of their lives. Now they were freed, and what happened? They were given the same old deal, expected to

scuffle and survive in perfect meekness, as though the war had been nothing.

The majority grumbled but took it; a minority refused. They wanted more. They tried to make up for lost time, immerse themselves in treats. Anything would do, really anything, just so long as it made a diversion.

The trouble was, there wasn't much available. There was no money about, no new careers. As long as rationing lasted, rebellion had to work to a very small scale.

Therefore, there was a terrific boom in frivolity. All the pent-up energy, the sense of waste and being cheated, went into leisure. Football and cricket crowds reached new levels, dance halls were packed, and so were theatres and cinemas. There was much drinking and gambling, and very much whoring and, as far as rationing allowed, these were fat years for menswear.

The opportunities were limited. Throughout the late forties and early fifties, clothing was bought by coupon, which meant that, unless you used the black market, your chances of dandyism were nil.

At the same time, manufacturers were kept under tight restrictions as well, both in the quantities they could turn out and in the range of materials they could use. Many factories were idle altogether; others worked at half-steam; and the net result was that many men owned only their demob suits, grey and shapeless.

Within these limits, though, there was a distinct upsurge of interest, most of it concentrated on the Charing Cross Road. In those days, this was distinctly racy, a haven of song pluggers and dirty book stalls, caffs and surgical trusses and, also, menswear retailers. Of these last, some were proper shops, famous for their brashness; and others were army surplus stores.

Army surplus played a crucial part in this period. It was cheap and it lasted and, if it wasn't elegant, it could at least be tarted up and made bearable. So duffel coats became popular, and also battle dress, which was then dyed black or dark

green, and they became the standard uniforms of the revivalist jazz fans, around the Soho clubs.

The real crux of Charing Cross Road, however, was Cecil Gee's store, which sold the flashiest, most glamorous suits in England: 'after the blitz, here comes the ritz'.

Gee was a small man in his early forties, the son of a Hatton Garden jeweller, and he had a little moustache, a bald patch and spectacles. In many ways, he was an archetypal Jewish shopkeeper, shy but shrewd, with a great and equal respect for both quality and profit.

Before the war, he'd owned several shops in the East End and belonged, as George Melly has written,* in 'the East End Jewish tradition of good tailoring, as exclusive in its way as Savile Row, if based on a different premise: the necessity to reveal conspicuous expenditure rather than to conceal it.'

In line with this, he'd always been more vivid and adventurous than the menswear trade in general. In the early thirties, he had sold striped shirts, and coat-shirts, and coloured shirts with collars attached, all of which were startling at the time, and his main shop, in the Whitechapel Road, attracted pilgrims from all over London and from the provinces too.

'Sunday was the great day in the East End,' he says. 'The shops stayed open late and everyone came down for the day, from Leeds and Sheffield and everywhere. It cost nine shillings for a day return from Leeds and business was fantastic.'

The Sunday Closing Act finished that and destroyed the East End as a shopping centre. But by then Gee had moved up West. In 1936, he opened in Charing Cross Road and, straightaway, he annexed most of the musicians' trade. By the war, he was dressing Jack Hylton.

Just the same, it was only after the war that he really took flight. In 1946, he introduced his American Look and, within weeks, there were queues all along his block, and halfway along the next.

The American Look was based on double-breasted, wide-

* George Melly, *Revolt Into Style: The Pop Arts in Britain* (The Penguin Press, 1970).

shouldered jackets, rather like the ones Cary Grant and Clark Gable had worn in thirties' films. They were often pinstriped, with wide lapels and big drapes, and they looked very much like the gangster suits that came in with the Bonnie and Clyde cult, twenty years later. (During the later craze, in fact, it became a favourite gambit for boutique owners to go down to the second-hand markets, buy up old Cecil Gee suits, clean them and tighten their fit, and then resell them. In the markets, they cost £4; in the boutiques, they fetched £20 or £25.)

Along with the jackets, Gee also sold imported American shirts, with long pointed collars (the 'Spearpoint'), and hand-painted ties, with pictures of cowboys and Indians or aeroplanes on them, and wide-brimmed American hats. The total effect was masculine, very confident, a bit rakish. In retrospect, they look a bit hoodlum; but at the time, they only seemed flash. Coming after the seediness of demob suits, they felt like luxury and the response was frantic: 'The customers went wild,' says Gee. 'The war had changed everything, you see. Everyone had been in khaki, cooped up until they were sick of it. So when they got out they went a bit mad. Before they were called up, they might have been as conservative as anything. But now there was no stopping them.

'It wasn't like today, when everything is taken for granted. In the forties, when you bought a new shirt or tie, it was a great event. It was a new lease of life.

'On Saturdays, I'd take a look outside and there were customers stretching down the road. I had to let them in six at a time and lock the doors behind them. Then serve them and let them out and let in another six.'

At the time, all this attracted very little publicity. The trade press mentioned it, a bit grudgingly, because they thought it undignified, and the national press ignored it completely. And yet, in his way, Cecil Gee was something quite new – the first designer to think in mass-market terms. 'The Man in the Street,' he says. 'Until I came along, no one gave him a thought.'

To that extent, he was a prototype John Stephen, fifteen

years ahead of his time and no doubt, if the media had been as developed in the forties as it had become by the early sixties, he would have been a celebrity. As it was, he remained a successful shopkeeper, no more.

One thing about him, however, was crucial – he was essentially a seller of ready-mades. Before the war, as I've said, the multiple tailors had sold made-to-measure, and they still do today; the Englishman has always worn an individual suit. But Cecil Gee, the first Pop designer, bypassed that and set a style that has survived in all cult clothing since – English male *fashion*, as opposed to everyday clothing, has been off-the-peg.

It was an obvious development for the twentieth century, being cheaper and quicker than the old way, and it has been one of the things that has most upset the High Street about fashion. Sooner or later, they've realized, ready-mades must take over entirely; but it's a change that they've fought against bitterly, because it was simpler to stay as they were.

As for Cecil Gee's designs, they were hardly original, in that they were American-inspired, revampings from ten years earlier. Still, they were new to England and, on their own terms, they were splendid: full of strength and impact, cheerfully tasteless.

Very quickly, other shops saw what was happening and began to copy him and cheapen him. The Charing Cross Road filled up with shops like Christmas trees and, in particular, the zoot suit came in.

The zoot was a wild exaggeration of Gee's own look, with jackets halfway down to the kneecap and shoulders padded like American football pros. It had already caught on in the States and, when it was introduced to Britain, it became the standard uniform of the spiv.

By 1950, the whole American look had grown delinquent implications. Gee's styles may have been ambivalent; his imitators were absolutely blatant. Instead of cowboys and Indians, the ties had nudes on them, and there were champagne-bottle tiepins, and Capone co-respondent shoes (black-and-white, or brown-and-white shoes, which had a

brief fashionable vogue in the twenties and then became identified with Al Capone and the Chicago gangs), and watch-straps that winked in the dark.

At this point, Cecil Gee quit. A moral man, he was choosy about his clientele: 'I could have made a fortune but I didn't care to. There were murders going on in Soho, and gang fights in the streets, and these weren't the people that I cared to deal with. So I moved into a different market. Still a fashion market but with quality – I have always believed in quality.'

In practice, this meant that he gradually faded out his American Look. His output became more respectable but less exciting – single-breasted jackets, sports shirts, slightly narrow trousers – and for the next few years, he rather marked time.

He was still extremely successful. He kept the musicians' trade, both jazz and dance-band, and opened a massive new branch in Shaftesbury Avenue, and other smaller branches in the suburbs. He called himself the Swish Tailor and his profits kept rising. But after 1950, there were no more queues outside his door.

Later on, in the mid-fifties, he introduced an Italian Look and started a whole new cycle. But that belongs in another chapter. For the moment, it's enough that he was the beginning: 'I created the thing that's fashion today,' he says, and it's an exaggeration but not outrageous.

3

New Edwardians

While Cecil Gee was making his breakthrough in Charing Cross Road, there were changes taking place in Savile Row too.

On the surface, they came from parallel causes – young men kicking against the drabness of the austerity and working out their restlessness in their clothes. Only the class level was different: most of the Savile Row rebels were guards officers, younger sons or those fabled beasts, men-about-town.

This gap in class, however, was enough to give the two movements a totally opposite slant. Charing Cross Road was concerned with the present and future, with achieving a freedom that had never before existed; while Savile Row made its protest in the form of a return to the past, back to more gracious and leisurely times.

As James Laver puts it*: 'There was an undoubted element of nostalgia. Since all clothes mean something, these meant: *I wish I could go back to an epoch when men of my class had all the advantages – chambers in Jermyn Street, a man-servant like Jeeves and an income from investments, which, if small, was assured.*'

In other words, although they may not yet have been fully conscious of the social changes that the war had made, they felt instinctively that their position was threatened and their clothes were a reaction, defences against the new order.

Their first move was to start wearing ornate brocade waistcoats, in the style of the 1890s. By itself, this was not an innovation, because there had been a similar revival at Eton before the war, but even so, worn by adults, it caused much disgruntlement around St James's.

* James Laver, *Dandies*.

Some tailors, in fact, refused outright to make such a garment. Others gritted their teeth and bore it: 'It was a bit alarming at first,' says Edward Packer, chairman of H. Huntsman, 'but we tried to be understanding.'

The brocade waistcoats, however, were merely an advance guard for much bigger revival in Edwardiana generally. The Edwardian age has always been seen as a golden age of English aristocracy and, from about 1948, guardsmen and bloods began to appear in long and narrow, single-breasted jackets and narrow trousers; turned-back velvet cuffs and velvet collars on overcoats; carnations, patterned waistcoats and silver-topped canes.

It caught on. Naturally, it wasn't always worn in such an extreme form but the basic narrowness of line spread into the homosexual world, and then into the would-be smart middle class and, by 1950, the Edwardian Look had become the dominant London fashion.

Of course, narrowness in the early fifties was not the same as narrowness in the sixties. There was no tightness or constriction, nor even much connection with the actual shape of the body. Even so, by comparison with pre-war style, there was a definite tapering, an effort towards elegance, and a great deal of nonsense was unfurled about the rebirth of the Dandy, renaissance of the exquisite.

Of all the neo-Edwardians, the most stylized and famous was Bunny Roger, the dressmaker.

For the last twenty years, Roger has been the most fastidious dresser in London and, even before the war, he'd been a landmark. Son of a successful businessman, he had gone to Loretto and up to Oxford and then on to art school, and had been expelled from the last two in double-quick time: ' "My goodness," I thought, "how very flattering".'

By the thirties, he was dressmaking in Newport Street, wearing pink suits and pink silk shirts, and his hair was so long that the ends met under his chin. Every time he walked down a street, he would be stared at and pointed at and followed, like a camp pied piper.

He spent the war in Italy, with the Rifle Brigade, and rather

distinguished himself: 'I wasn't frightened. I kept thinking "Well, at least it's not as bad as school," and do you know, it wasn't.

'The uniform was rather pretty as well, sort of dark green with lovely black buttons. Of course, I had to take the trousers in. I made them very tight, rather like ballet tights.'

After demob, he went back to his millinery and worked at Fortnum & Mason and then, in 1950, he had his greatest triumph. He was no young whipper-snapper, he was forty but he took the new Edwardian Look and he turned it into wildest fantasy.

For a start, he brought in colour. Before him, despite the vogue for brocade waistcoats, the actual suits had all been grey or dark; but now Bunny Roger burst forth in greens and gold and crimsons, pinks and purples; and he draped himself in accessories and trinkets – pearl-grey, curly-brimmed bowlers; monocles and watch-chains and diamond stickpins; gold-topped canes and carnations of varying colours.

The effect was stunning but theatrical, vaguely music hall, as though he were perpetually en route for the Edgware Road Metropolitan, booked to appear in a sketch about toffs.

His style has not changed since. He is sixty now but miraculously preserved, as trim and spruce as ever, and his waistcoats are still tight as sausage-skins, his make-up immaculate. He owns a hundred and twenty suits, all cut in the same Edwardian style and, if he was heroic in 1950, he is now almost a monument, an extravagance to compare with the Albert Memorial.

He was on his own. Despite a fair amount of fuss, the new dandyism didn't come to much. As the novelty wore off, the guards officers tended to backslide and the most adventurous dressing was done by older men – Cecil Beaton, of course, and Norman Parkinson, the photographer John French and the designer Oliver Messel and, by far the most flamboyant, the antiques journalist Simon Fleet.

Famous names apart, dressiness was confined largely to homosexuals. Since they were cut off from the mainstream anyway, both sexually and socially, they had nothing to lose

by outrageousness in their clothes. And then, in any case, they tended to have a subtler sense of colour and texture than heteros.

More and more, the Edwardian Look became associated with queerness, therefore, and this helped to finish it as an ordinary middle-class fashion. Outside London, its success was minimal, except at Oxbridge, where it was part of a resurgence in aestheticism.

In the early fifties this was concentrated mostly on Cambridge; but it followed on from another, rather different movement, which had flourished in Oxford a couple of years earlier, and had been led by Kenneth Tynan.

Tynan was grammar-school, left-wing and theatrical, and he dominated a grammar-school left-wing and the theatrical group, a crowd which he describes as 'tough, audacious and piratical, not at all interested in being beautiful'.

In itself, such a group was hardly new – tough, audacious and piratical grammar-school boys had been an Oxbridge tradition well before the war – but it used a different style. In the thirties, and again the fifties, the unprivileged tended to adopt a deliberate dourness and anti-glamour, as in *Lucky Jim*, first in defence against possible patronization and, later, in inverted snobbery.

During the forties, however, such a stance would have been a bit meaningless, because no frivolities survived to be shamed. Just so long as rationing survived, everyone was stuck in the same boat: coupons, army surplus and what Tynan calls 'a perpetual Dunkirk of the spirit'.

'One kept on being told about the long haul ahead, the years of sacrifice and abnegation that would be needed, and one refused to accept it. One was ambitious and restless and one wouldn't wait. One felt one had to make a gesture.'

With Tynan, this gesture took the form of sartorial insanity. Starting off slowly (most people wore khaki battledress, so Tynan wore black), he worked up gradually to flat-out exhibitionism. He wore gold satin shirts, purple doeskin suits and ear-rings. He dyed his hair lighter and then darker. He wore

bright corduroy trousers, or duck-egg blue, and he carried an umbrella, tied up with red ribbon.

This was not dandyism: Tynan, and those who followed him, weren't concerned with clothes as objects but as symbols, stink bombs flung full in the enemies' face. And at that level, they had great effect. On Guy Fawkes' night, Tynan was burned in effigy on the Broad; he was lampooned and insulted by *Isis*; and long before he came down and assaulted London, he was famous.

The Edwardian revival at Cambridge, which broke through around 1951-2, came from the same impulses but used a different approach. There was the same discontent with austerity, the same restlessness and, like Tynan and his circle, most of the undergraduates involved later turned into media-men, the new fifties establishment of journalism, TV and the theatre.

But, at Cambridge, they came mostly from public rather than grammar schools and their gestures were aesthetic rather than anarchic. Like the guards officers in Savile Row, they talked a great deal about returns to grace and elegance, although in practice this meant only a return to preciousness. 'A lot of people read *Brideshead Revisited,*' says Simon Hodgson, who went to Kings. 'It did them no good.'

Actually, a lot of people didn't; numerically, the Edwardian cult was very small indeed. But what there was of it, it made a lot of noise and attracted enough notice for *Men's Wear* magazine, early in 1953, to organize a symposium, at which undergraduates were invited to argue the future of male fashion.

Predictably, this passed off in great confusion. Mark Boxer turned up in a green tweed jacket, a check waistcoat and drainpipe trousers; Brian Lloyd-Pratt in full Edwardian drag, complete with a waisted and skirted jacket, turned-back cuffs, bow tie and wing collar; Anthony Sampson in grey Savile Row orthodoxy; Brian Todd in bright yellow corduroy, cut like a tent; and none of them agreed on anything.

Men's Wear was intrigued but unimpressed and, in retrospect, Mark Boxer agrees with them. 'It was all terribly naive and badly done,' he says. 'If I wore the same green jacket today, I would probably be taken for a rather seedy park keeper.'

Still, it was at least an attempt and sometimes it waxed extremely passionate. Johnnie Bellingham used to send all his shirts to be laundered in Switzerland and there were a number of cherished silver-topped canes, cravats and carnations dyed in green ink. Above all, the status symbol was a Charvet tie from Paris. Or failing that, an ordinary tie with a Charvet label sewn on.

It was just a passing flourish, a folly. When Mark Boxer's generation came down, they were replaced by regiments of duffel coats, woollen scarves and bicycle clips, and dandyism was more or less forgotten for another decade.

The Edwardian Look, meanwhile, lasted till about 1954, by which time it had been taken up and caricatured by the Teddy Boys, who made it so disreputable that even homosexuals were embarrassed to wear it.

Nothing could have been more ironic: having started as an upper-class defence, Edwardiana now formed the basis for the first great detonation of male working-class fashion.

4

Teds

In terms of English teenagers, Teddy Boys were the start of everything: rock 'n roll and coffee bars, clothes and bikes and language, jukeboxes and coffee with froth on it – the whole concept of a private teen life style, separate from the adult world.

Before the war, working-class, and most middle-class kids had shared everything with their parents. They had danced to the same music, sat through the same films, worn the same clothes. 'In the thirties, being a teenager meant a pound a week and acne,' says John Taylor, who edits *Style Weekly*. 'They tried to dress like their fathers, they wore tweeds and smoked pipes. It was like lamb dressed as mutton and, even if they tried to be different, all they could get was a sixpenny tie from Woolworths.'

The reason for this lack of identity was simple: they had no money to spend. They were apprenticed or they were on the dole or they gave their wages to their mothers. In any case, they had no means of rising up and running amok.

Even after the war, things stayed tight. But by the early fifties, the austerity was ending and it was possible to experiment. For the first time, teenagers found themselves making proper money, anything up to £20 a week, and they started looking for things to spend it on.

In the beginning, this wasn't easy. Since the adolescent market had always been minimal, there were no businessmen aiming for teenage custom. There were no teen clubs and no teen music, no teen foods or clothes. Nothing that didn't apply equally to adults.

By the middle fifties, the gap would be filled. Catching on

fast, businessmen began to bombard the market with gimmicks and a whole new industry was launched.

But when the Teds first started, around 1952, they had none of this. They existed in a vacuum, without any kind of sponsorship and/or exploitation. They rode bikes or went to the movies or hung around in arcades. Mostly, they stood on street-corners, watching.

They were hooligans. They were kids with money and time to waste and nothing to do. They were bored and malcontent, and they formed themselves into gangs. Sometimes they only roamed the streets and brawled a bit and made noise; sometimes they got involved in real crime. But they didn't break laws for profit, or not primarily – the attraction lay in the excitement, the sense of action. The word 'kicks' was used a lot and it meant something, anything that made time pass.

The first Teds emerged in the East End and in North London, around Tottenham and Highbury, and from there they spread southwards, to Streatham and Battersea and Purley, and westwards, to Shepherds Bush and Fulham, and then down to the seaside towns, and up into the Midlands until, by 1956, they had taken root all over Britain.

Essentially, their uniform was a bowdlerization of the Savile Row Edwardian Look, hence the name Teddy Boys, but they also used elements of the zoot suit, with a very long and loose-draped jacket.

Drapes apart, they wore tight drainpipe jeans, tapered to the ankle, and luminous yellow socks; creepers, large crêpe-soled shoes like boats; brass rings on several fingers, worn both for ornament and for destruction; riverboat gamblers' bootlace ties; and often, in the back jeans pocket, a flick-knife.

They also had a standardized face, which was pinched and underfed, a bit ratty, and they tended to pimples and acne. But their greatest glory was their sideburns, which had to sprout well past the ear-lobe, and their hair, which was worn long and swept up in a quiff at the front, then dragged back at the sides and slopped down heavy with hair-oil.

This style was known as the duck's arse and variations were

a diamond-shaped crewcut on top, with the rest hanging down from the crown, and the Boston, cut straight across at the back, above a shaved white neck.

That wasn't all. The draped jackets would be black or maroon or sometimes powder blue, and there might be a flash of fancy waistcoat as well. Altogether, the effect was one of heroic excess: garish, greasy and quite magnificent.

None of this was cheap: a proper Ted suit would cost between £15 and £20, hand-made by a back-street tailor, and all the accessories would double that. If you wished to make top Ted, you had to be prepared to stroll into a dance hall with £50 on your back.

This dedication was one of the things that made Teddy Boys so different from all that had preceded them. They had no concern with morals, politics, philosophies of any kind – Style was their only value and, about that, they were fanatic.

It wasn't an easy discipline to survive in. The photographer Don McCullin, for instance, lived in Tottenham and used to hang out with a gang but never got fully involved. 'I was making £3 a week on the railways,' he says. 'How could I keep up?

'The Tottenham Royal was the biggest centre in North London and, the moment you walked in, all the birds would put a price on you. Your jacket, your shoes, even your tieclip – before you'd even noticed them, they'd have you costed down to your socks.

'There was always a greasy comb around. That was a major instrument of attraction. Before you asked a girl to dance, you'd stand in front of her and comb your hair, staring right at her, with sort of hooded eyes.

'Most of the time, we used to hang around the amusement arcade in Seven Sisters Road and play pinball, for a cigarette a replay. Right across the road, there was Greys Dance Hall, where the policeman was stabbed. Bert Assirati, the wrestler, used to be on the door and if he caught you with a razor or bicycle chain he'd fling you out in the street. But there were fights just the same, and knifings and slashings – that's where it all really happened.'

Such intensity couldn't last. By 1955, Bill Haley's *Rock Around The Clock* had been released, and the following year there was Elvis Presley, and Chuck Berry, Little Richard and Jerry Lee Lewis, the whole rock 'n roll pantheon.

On the surface, this provided the Teds' finest hour. They rioted and tore up cinema seats, they got headlines in the papers and were turned into TV documentaries and had middle-aged businessmen pursuing them in hordes, as though they were a holy grail. They turned from a minority cult into a mass crusade, and there were months of wild excitement, in which it must have seemed as if they, the teenagers, were going to take over completely.

All of this was idyllic. But in the long run it was also ruinous because, as the message spread, so its style became diluted and it lost its guts and identity.

In this, the Teds provided a blueprint for all future teenage cults. One by one, they would form underground and lay down their basic premises, to be followed with near-millennial fervour by a very small number; then they would emerge into daylight and begin to spread from district to district; then they would catch fire suddenly and produce a national explosion; then they would attract regiments of hangers-on and they would be milked by industry and paraded endlessly by media; and then, robbed of all novelty and impact, they would die.

So it was with the Teds. Although their riotings had been triumphant in themselves and the movement grew beyond recognition, most of the new converts stopped half-way. They didn't bother with the full uniform, down to the bootlace ties and luminous socks, but contented themselves with a pair of tight blue jeans and a duck's arse haircut, just to give the general impression.

After 1956, creepers began to be replaced by black, Italian-style, pointed-toe shoes and this became the basic teenage look of the late fifties and early sixties, especially in the north: blue jeans with turn-ups and, sticking out underneath, winkle-pickers.

Around the same time, the draped Ted jacket also began to fade out, to be replaced by the short, box-like Italian look and, from then on, the signals were plain: by 1958, the full Teddy Boy regalia had become hopelessly outmoded and those that wore it were deliberately archaic.

Most of the original Teds passed twenty and got married and settled down; some turned to leather jackets and motor-bikes, and became the first Rockers; and just a few refused to be budged. Mule-headed, they stuck to the old ways and old uniforms, and they remained steadfast for ever.

They are still the same today, middle-aged men with paunches and Skinhead sons but quite unswerving in their loyalty. They are a sect, a secret society. Organized into cabals, like the North Finchley Rock 'n Roll Preservation Society, they meet in the back rooms of pubs and appear once more in their fineries, the velvet drapes and spangled waist-coats and rings, and their hair, what's left of it, is still thick with grease, and their sideboards are like scimitars.

Then they sit in corners and speak of Eddie Cochran, of James Dean and Mamie van Doren, as though remembering a bygone age, when men were men and died as they lived, and women all had big breasts. It's still only fifteen years ago but they might as well be talking of the Irish Easter Rising or the Boer War, it seems so distant: stiletto heels and beehives, red ruby lips, Vince Taylor, and do you remember Sabrina?

Still, however anachronistic they may have become, the Teds' initial impact was terrific. In particular, they made two breakthroughs that have dominated male fashion ever since.

The first was that they made clothes sexual again. After a hundred and fifty years of concealment, it was Teddy Boys who brought back flamboyance and preening. The baroque complexities of their costume, the tightness in the thigh and crotch, and their rituals of attraction, like the hair-combing in front of women – all of this was in the classic peacock tradition: direct sexual display.

Because of this, the post-Brummell conventions became

meaningless: there was no more hankering after social status, and no more pretence at anonymity. Clothes became slogans.

Obviously, these were far-reaching changes and at last, with the Teds, the effects of the war became apparent. It had destroyed the sense of family and tradition, of one generation handing on to the next. For the first time, kids didn't want to look like their fathers. In fact, whatever their fathers looked like, they wanted to look exactly opposite. James Laver's patriarchal principle had been smashed completely and, since they thought of their fathers as safe and grey and sexless, a bit seedy, the Teds now tried to be desperadoes. Essentially, their clothes said just three things: *I am different; I am tough; I fuck.*'

In the place of heritage, the Teddy Boys began a new culture: Pop.

The essence of this was that the past was irrelevant. In Pop, it was the moment that counted, and the immediate future, and everything was made instant. Rock 'n roll records lasted for three months and were then discarded; dance-crazes and language became equally ephemeral, and so did clothes. The pre-war aims of workmanship and wear were ignored. What was all-important now was impact: the first flash of recognition; the sexual buzz.

The other great breakthrough of the Teds was to establish the working class as the new arbiter of style. Before them, as I have said elsewhere, fashion was created by the upper class and then filtered gradually downwards; but the Teds, and Pop, changed all that.

There was a guts and originality about them that orthodox middle-class cultures couldn't compete with. And they *were* original – their uniform might derive from the Edwardian Look or zoot suits but the final effect was all their own, and they made kids from other backgrounds feel mimsy by comparison.

So richer classes began to copy them. Perhaps they didn't adopt the full drag, perhaps they were even alarmed by Teds in real life, roaming the streets in such murderous packs. Even

so, they took many of the same tastes and attitudes, hoping to catch the magic. Public schoolboys got themselves expelled for sneaking out to see *Jailhouse Rock*; blue jeans became *de rigueur*; the bourgeoisie began to talk common.*

The flirtation with the lower classes stretched beyond Teds. It was also expressed in the fads for books like *Room At The Top* and *Lucky Jim*, plays like *Look Back in Anger* and the Wesker trilogy, films like *The Wild Ones* (despite, or because of, its outlawing) and *Rebel Without A Cause*.

In particular, these currents took hold among art students, and would-be art students, and it was here that the Ted influence came through most strongly. At Hornsey and the Slade, Elvis Presley was worshipped as fiercely as in the Tottenham Royal and there were just as many sideboards, and crotch-tight jeans.

Around this time, art-school dress was becoming experimental generally. Of course, the students had always been ahead of the pack. Even before the war they'd grown their hair long and dressed trampishly, in the best bohemian tradition. But now they went further and the colleges were turning into bazaars, hothouses for every kind of sartorial unrest. The art student, in fact, had become the leader of middle-class rebellion and he has remained so ever since.

As I've said, Teds were not the only influence. Certainly, there were drainpipes, winklepickers and sideburns but James Dean had also made a deep impression and his look, an adaptation of the Western style, was more popular still: jeans, denim jackets, open-necked shirts and, if you were truly daring, dark glasses.

Also, there was a craze for fancy dress. Ever since the war this had been a developing sport and, by the fifties, it was booming. Victorian relics were brought down from attics and captured from second-hand stalls; straw boaters appeared, and battered top hats, and women's fur coats; anything funny, anything anarchic: Alexander Plunket-Greene went to

* Here began the English 'Pop' voice—a slack-lipped and adenoidal whine, without any hard consonants or sharp vowels. Filled with random obscenity, this style was perfected in the sixties by Mick Jagger.

Quaglino's, the Soho nightclub, and wore a suit but no shirt, just a row of buttons painted on his chest.

It was a real release. In 1955, Plunket-Greene's wife, Mary Quant, opened a shop called Bazaar in the Kings Road, based on the kind of clothes that art students were wearing and, straightaway, she turned the whole of women's fashion upside down; in menswear, the same process took a few years longer; but in both cases, art-college style played a crucial role in the development of fashion generally.

Just the same, the Teds were the great originators. 'They started everything,' says Plunket-Greene. 'Once they'd made the breakthrough, everyone else could follow and the whole Pop thing went bang.'

5

Savile Row and the High Street

As I have said, the Edwardian Look had been conceived as the first step towards a dandies renaissance. In the event, however, it had entirely the opposite effect. Instead of being a fresh beginning, it proved to be a death-rattle, a sentimental last fling.

The reasons for this were simple – real dandyism took too much time and money and effort. At the least, one needed a valet, and bespoke suits and hand-made shirts, shoes and hats, with all the fitting sessions that these required, and then enough spare time to dress up impeccably each morning, and manage a couple of quick changes during the day. Truthfully, to do it properly, one must devote half one's life to it.

Obviously, in the post-war world, very few people could meet the requirements. For that matter, very few wanted to. If one could afford it, dandyism made a pleasant camp game for a year or two but that was all it was : a conceit, a diversion. Therefore, when the Edwardian Look was torpedoed by the Teds, nothing replaced it.*

Savile Row didn't help. Having goaded itself to velvet collars and brocade waistcoats, it now seemed exhausted. At any rate, it failed to follow up. Perhaps its cuts were slightly slimmer and more shaped than pre-war, and its cloths were lighter, but there were no new styles. 'We are considering the situation,' announced the Men's Fashion Council in 1953, a group of twelve among the most powerful Savile Row firms, and that's as far as they got.

(Savile Row, I should say, is more than just a street. Within the menswear trade, it is used as a generic term for all West

* The same pattern was repeated, though in a more extreme form, by another generation in the early 1960s (see pp. 78–85).

End bespoke tailoring and its heartlands extend for about quarter of a mile in every direction from Bond Street. It includes not only tailors but shirtmakers, hatters and bootmakers – the whole range of nineteenth-century, upper-class clothing. 'For gentlemen and others,' as one tailor puts it.)

During the mid-fifties, custom began to drift away. Before the war, sons had gone automatically to the same tailor as their fathers but now, even at this social level, the patriarchy wasn't what it had been and young men began to defect. They thought Savile Row humbug, all those fittings and adjustments, all that obsequience and, at the end of it, what? Another dark grey suit.

They didn't desert in droves, or not immediately. Still, there were enough blacklegs to be both galling and ominous, even for the biggest firms. As for the minnows, one or two went bust straightaway, and more began to struggle. From now on Savile Row was in trouble, increasing yearly.

Having rejected their tailors, the rebels then went into stores and bought off the peg. The only trouble was, ready-made clothes of the period were just as drab as bespoke. There were no smart boutiques yet; Cecil Gee was a single oasis. Therefore, for a lot of upper-class youths, the fifties became a lost decade.

As far as the general public was concerned, however, Savile Row remained as imposing as ever. Somewhere around the turn of the century, it had acquired symbolic status, as the epitome of everything plush and, by now, the image had sunk too deep into the collective consciousness to be easily destroyed. A Rolls Royce, a magnum of champagne and a fat cigar, a Savile Row suit – these were still the dreamed-of badges of wealth.

Within the menswear industry, too, Savile Row was unchallenged. The multiple tailors and High Street stores looked towards the Men's Fashion Council for direction and, whatever styles the Council proposed, these were taken up automatically by the mass middle-class trade.

Savile Row itself, meanwhile, was busy trying to dig up a new leader of fashion, in succession to Edward VII and the

Duke of Windsor. Ideally, they would have liked royalty but the contenders weren't strong. For a time the Duke of Edinburgh was adopted and photographed by the trade magazines, resplendent in Norfolk jacket and plus-fours; but he couldn't keep up the pace. Winston Churchill, Anthony Eden and the Duke of Kent – all of them were tried and all of them discarded. 'Does he exist?' asked the Men's Fashion Council, desperate. 'That man of distinction, breeding and taste.'

As it happened, there *was* some good Savile Row dressing in the fifties. Not much but some, and most of it by middle-aged men who had settled on a look before the war and still dressed the same way, conservatively but with care and a sense of pleasure.

Cyril Ray, the wine writer, was typical of this breed. He was a short and awkwardly shaped man, and no one would have called him a dandy, but every item that he wore was perfect in itself. His shoes were hand-made by Cleverley of Cork Street, his shirts came from Edouard & Butler, his suits from Sullivan & Woolley. And he himself, although unmonied by birth and socialist by principle, was involved in all the rites, had an apartment in the Albany and belonged to the Athenaeum.

It was a gracious existence and Ray was a civilized man. In his clothes, he didn't look for impact, to be stared at or commented on. All that concerned him were the garments themselves, their innate qualities, and he treated them most tenderly. Always, his suits were newly brushed, his shoes polished, his trousers pressed.

By the sixties, his type was almost extinct. 'Ah, Mr Ray,' said his cobbler, when I mentioned his name. 'If only there were a few more like him. But then, of course, today there are no gentlemen.'

But if fastidiousness was dying out among customers, there was also a decline beginning in the thoroughness of Savile Row itself. Labour costs were rising, apprentices were becoming hard to find, and the financial pressures were great. To keep up, short cuts were used. By comparison with

tailors abroad, the level of workmanship was still supreme; but by its own pre-war standards, Savile Row was skimping.

The mass trade, meanwhile, was in even worse shape. After the war, the manufacturers and High Street stores had re-started with fanfares and the trade magazines were full of wildest promises: just as soon as rationing was ended, a new age would dawn.

Grainger & Smith, Woollens, were typical in tone. 'Looking forward,' said the ads, 'so that we can go . . . together into a world of accomplishment.' And: 'Looking forward . . . to an era when only those who are fit to serve will survive.' And again: 'Our plans have long been ready – and, with you, we will reap the harvest for which we have toiled so long.'

It didn't last. Within a year or two, the wartime spirit was wearing thin and, by 1950, all worlds of accomplishment had been quietly forgotten. The mass industry followed behind Savile Row, just as they'd always done, and altered as little as possible.

During the early fifties, the double-breasted suit went out of favour and left the field to the single-breasted, button-three in dark grey: the classic High Street suit.

It was very ugly indeed. It had no shape and no life, no sense of movement. In fact, it was anti-clothing, a denial of attraction and, for the next twenty years, it remained *the* English suit, the dominant self-image.

Why? Partly it survived through complacency, and partly through habit, and partly because the manufacturers were too idle to come up with anything new. But the basic reason was that it was pre-war, even Victorian, in inspiration, and that was the world to which the majority of Englishmen still belonged.

I have written about society being reshaped by the war but, of course, it was only the young who were changed, and not all of *them*. Most middle-aged men, and the more conservative among their offspring, lived by the same criteria as before. They wanted to be respectable, businesslike, anonymous. They wanted their clothes to hide them.

These were the same people that ran the industry. They

were manufacturers and directors and branch-managers, and all of them went along, instinctively, with the concept of clothes as negation. They took their cues from Savile Row and believed that dandyism equalled exhibitionism, probably downright perversion: 'It is important not to look too smart,' said the Men's Fashion Council, and the industry accepted it.

At the top, there sat Montague Burton and Hepworths and Associated Tailors, like three vast and broody hens, controlling two-thirds of menswear turnover; beneath their wings, there sheltered Hornes and John Collier, Dunns and Alexandres and the other multiples, controlling an extra quarter; and not one of them believed in experiment. They had the cash in the bank. They were satisfied.

Towards the end of the fifties, however, they began to waver. In the background, there was now an uneasiness. The balance sheets showed no decline, but the success of Cecil Gee, and the rise of the Teddy Boys, and the changing atmosphere generally, had all left their mark and produced a certain fearfulness for the future. The industry began to flap about a bit, making small gestures of innovation.

For a start, it began to look abroad. Before the war such a thing was unthinkable, chasing after foreigners, but, in 1956, Cecil Gee had brought in his Italian Look and cleaned up on it, and the implications were unavoidable. The trade magazines began to show outfits by European designers, and discuss European trends, and manufacturers trooped off to an annual menswear orgy, the San Remo Festival of Masculine Mode.

In the long run, none of this came to much, because continental fashion was so far ahead of our own and involved such a range of fabrics and colours that English manufacturers were overawed and turned tail. Sweating cold, they scuttled off home to Leeds. 'The British have a motto,' said Brioni, the Italian designer. 'They say *it can't be done*.'

Still, San Remo had one side-effect in that it helped popularize the fashion show. The Men's Fashion Council were already putting on shows at the Savoy, unveiling each single-breasted, button-three as though it came from Chanel or

Molyneux; and now the mass trade introduced something called the International Boys' and Men's Wear Exhibition (IMBEX) and put it on yearly at Earls Court.

As carnivals go, this was pretty tawdry stuff, row upon row of grey suits. But with each year, it received more publicity and attracted more visitors, and it seemed symptomatic of a general rise in interest. Just the fact that people would take time to look at men's clothes, however tame, was an advance by definition.

The fifties also saw the beginning of full-time male modelling. In the past, this had always been the province of out-of-work actors but, in 1953, a woman called Jean Scott-Atkinson opened an agency, Scotty's, which handled both male and female models, and very soon she produced a superstar, Michael Bentley.

Bentley was an American, born in Philadelphia, and had arrived in London in 1952. For a time, he was an adman and then an actor but he wasn't successful until he started modelling professionally, in 1954.

After that there was no stopping him. For the rest of the decade he averaged three hundred fan letters a week, and that without any personal build-up, without even getting his name on his pictures. Richard Greene (*Robin Hood*) and Roger Moore (*The Saint*) also had spells with Scotty's but it was always Bentley who brought in mail: 'the Twiggy of the fifties,' as he himself says. Even after he retired and went to work for Hardy Amies, in 1961, no one ever replaced him.

But by far the most important development of the fifties, in the long run, was the introduction and promotion of man-made fibres. As yet, they were thought a bit disreputable and weren't used in high fashion but, in the High Street, they became absolutely vital. From 1950 on, they kept expanding all the time and, by the end of the decade, they were dominant. Terylene and nylon and rayon, and mixtures – suddenly, everything seemed to be synthetic.

This had far-reaching implications. Since man-made fibres were both economic and practical, it was possible that, within the next few decades, they would replace natural fibres alto-

gether. Therefore, it was worth while to take trouble with their design.

It didn't happen. In the fifties, synthetics looked horrid. They were cheap enough, certainly, but they looked it. Drip-dry and uncrushable, they were scabby like bad plastic and they meant that the High Street seemed even worse than ever. Before the war, it had only been boring; now it was sluttish as well.

6

Yellow Socks are Out

The first time that I came to London, in 1956, I used to spend all my afternoons in the Charing Cross Road, with my nose pressed up tight against the musicians' window at Cecil Gee. Inside, there was a Vathek-like magnificence, the most splendorous sights that I'd seen in my life: danceband uniforms of lamé or silk or satin, all tinselled and starred, a shimmering mass of maroons and golds and purples, silvers and pure sky-blues, like fireworks.

It was one of London's great landmarks and, to me, the finest of all Gee's creations. For Mister Swish himself, however, it must have been a backwater, one tiny facet of an empire that had grown to fourteen shops by 1959 and had reached a yearly turnover of almost £2 million.

Right up to 1957, he remained unchallenged, both in theatricality and value. Whatever the fashion, he did it first and did it brashest and, when rock 'n roll came in, he dressed Tommy Steele and Marty Wilde, just as he had once dressed Jack Hylton.

He also had a near-monopoly of modern jazzmen, who wished to look American. By the fifties, the transatlantic style no longer meant zoot suits or hand-painted ties. Instead, this was the age of Cool, of Gerry Mulligan and Chet Baker, and drummers with hooded eyes and a cigarette hanging off their lower lips, short-cropped Nero haircuts, hypodermics and shades. Everything was saturnine, understated, and the suits were dark and conservative, but cut bigger and more butch than most English suits, with lots of chest and shoulder.

If you wanted to get it exactly right, you had to go to Ben Harris, a Soho tailor, who cut the most advanced and authentic-looking American suits in London ('Almost a

genius,' says Eric Joy, who worked for him, 'and the best, most honest man I've met'); but if you were poor and impatient, which most musicians were, you made a compromise with Cecil Gee and consoled yourself with Old Spice after-shave, which was then unavailable in England and had to be brought back from New York by Geraldo's navy.*

The modernist look was used not only by musicians themselves but by the whole Bop scene, semi-pros and fans and hangers-on, and by many of the younger West End hustlers.

Still, this was all on a very small scale compared to the Italian Look, which Gee launched in 1956.

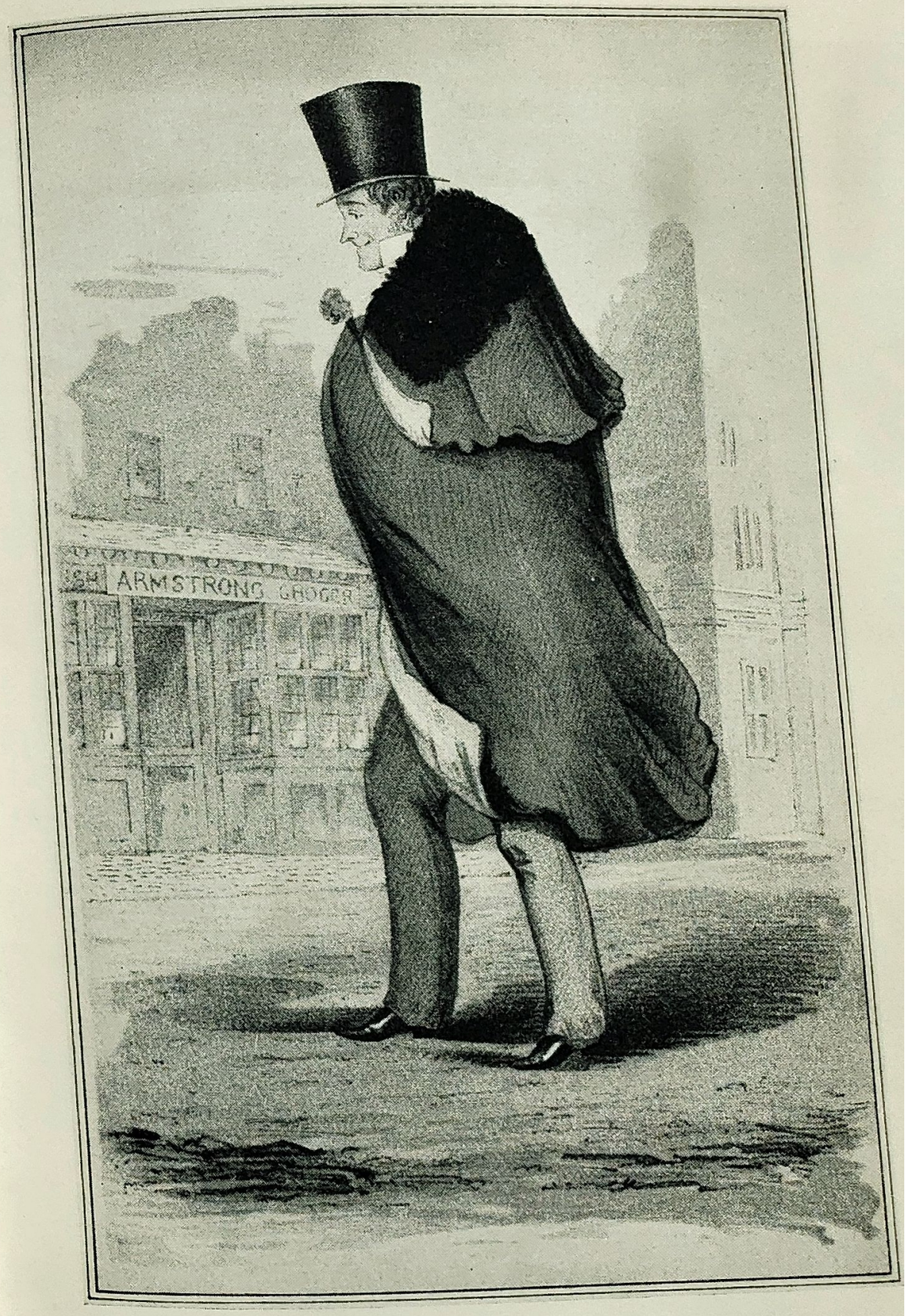
'After I opened up in Shaftesbury Avenue, I knew there had to be a return to neatness, after the razzle-dazzle American styles,' he says. 'Then I went to Italy for my holidays. There were all these marvellous fabrics and colours, and the manufacturers would give you anything you asked for, and I thought *This is for me*. So I put on a whole Italian season and that was the first time that elegance came to England.'

Actually, there was less divine inspiration involved than this might suggest. The San Remo festivals, and the work of designers like Brioni, had already made Italian styles known over here, at least within the trade, and fashion journalists had been predicting a boom for months. Cecil Gee did not discover the look; he was merely the first with courage and energy enough to get behind it and shove.

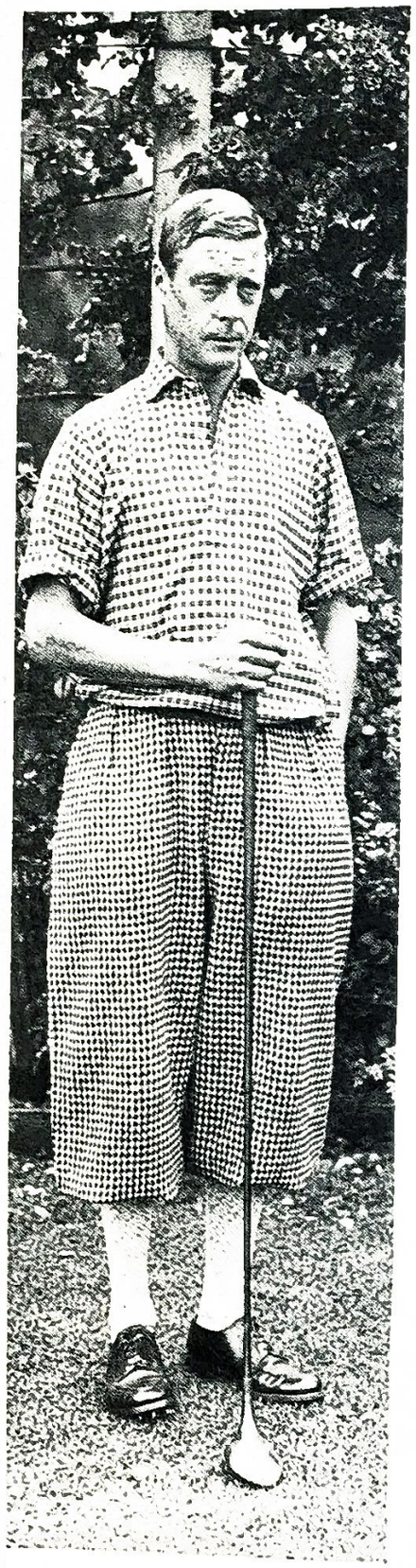
Brioni, of Rome, was the leading Italian stylist at the time and Gee's look was a variation and tarting-up of his basic shape: a short, boxlike jacket, with narrow trousers, in a lightweight fabric like mohair.

Even in Brioni's version, this produced an effect of squatness and constriction; but when Gee took it up and exaggerated it, one came to look like a man in his kid brother's clothes. The jacket would ride up at the back, thereby giving the style its nickname, the 'bum-freezer', and the pants were too short in the ankle, and the buttons too tight across the chest. Worn

* Geraldo, the band leader, supplied musicians to the transatlantic liners and, throughout the fifties, they provided an invaluable source of supply for all things American.



1 Beau Brummell, who created modern male costume. In his own time, he was ultra-conservative, a reaction against the extravagant Beaux of the eighteenth century.



2, 3 *and* 4
As the first Dandy, Brummell set standards – propriety, neatness, discretion – which ruled English menswear for the next 150 years. During this long renunciation, few men tried to experiment or create a personal style. Two who did were Edward VII (*above*) and the Duke of Windsor (*left*). Being royalty, they could get away with eccentricities that most men would not have dreamed of.

Other flamboyants appeared in aesthetic and bohemian circles. A prime example was Cecil Beaton (*opposite*), who emerged in the late twenties, dressing with flair and obvious self-regard.

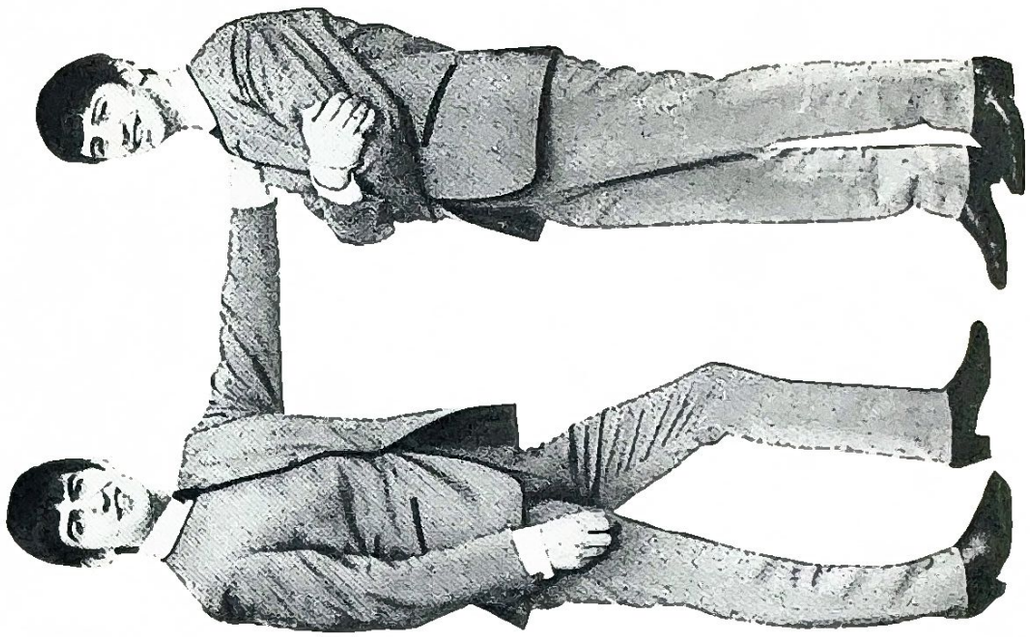
5 *and* 6 *Left*, a recreation of Cecil Gee's American Look. Coming immediately after the second world war, at the height of the austerity, this was an escape from the demob suit. With broad shoulders and big chests, spear-point collars, hand-painted ties and co-respondent shoes, the overall impression was masculine, sporty, slightly disreputable.

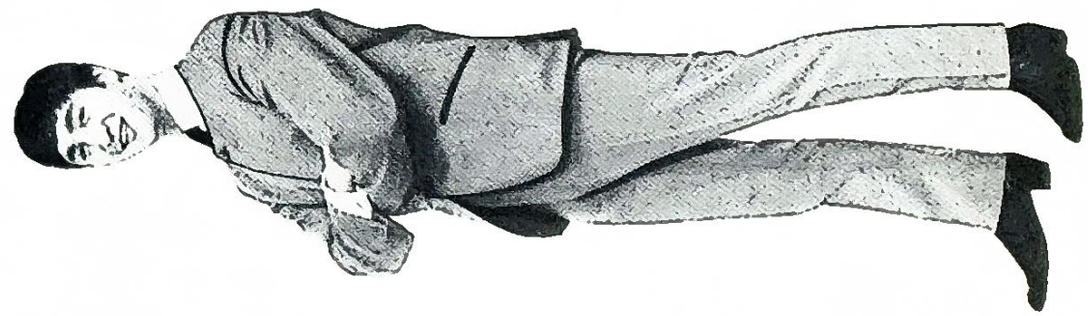
The American Look, based in the Charing Cross Road, sold to a largely working-class public; the Edwardian Look, which succeeded it, had its beginnings in Savile Row and was an attempt at recapturing more gracious times, when upper-class supremacy had still been unchallenged. Bunny Roger (*above*) was its most famous exponent and his long jacket, curly-brimmed bowler, tiepin, gloves and silver-topped cane were all part of his everyday turn-out.

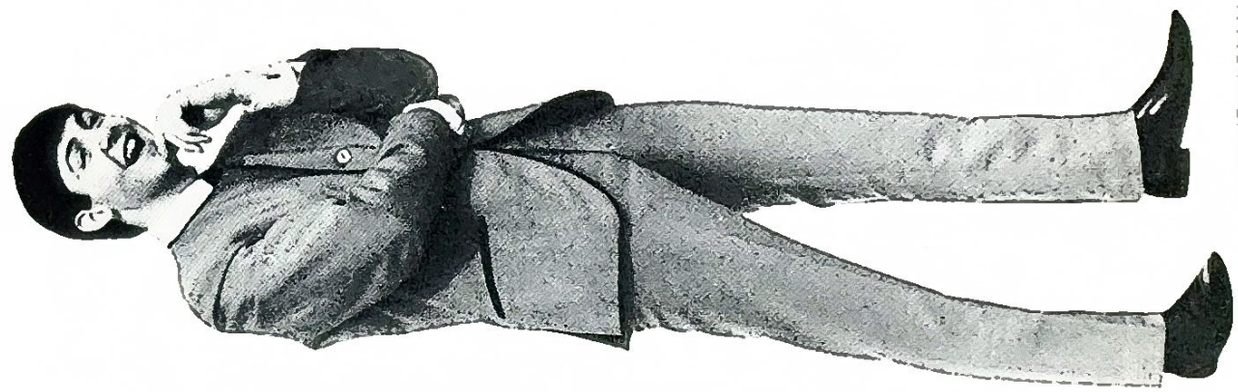
7, 8 and 9
Teddy boys (*left*) were originators in two important senses: they created the first private teenage style and they were the first working-class group to be aped by the affluent and fashionable.

(*Right*) Bill Green. He opened a shop called Vince in the early fifties, just off Carnaby Street, and all the street's later triumphs stemmed from him. In the beginning he sold cut-down briefs (*inset*); then expanded to mail-order catalogues (*below*), full of tight jeans and casual, open-necked shirts. At the time his stuff was thought outrageous.

10, 11 *and* 12
Wedding picture, 1962. Long hair first became popular among Beats in the late fifties, then spread to art students, Trad jazz fans and Aldermaston marchers. (*Right*) The boxer, Billy Walker modelling John Stephen's 'His Clothes', also in 1962. At first Carnaby Street had catered largely to homosexuals; Walker, aggressively masculine, was a turning-point in making its styles acceptable to a mass teenage market. (*Opposite*) A Beatles publicity picture, circa 1963 – their collarless jackets were derived from Pierre Cardin.







13 *and* 14 Mod began as élitism, confined to a handful of middle-class suburban exquisites. From there, in the space of three years, it spread and grew into a major teenage movement, largely working class. As it did so, its emotional style coarsened and became violent; but its narcissism and clothes-obsession survived. The white-suited youth above, a Tottenham Mod of 1964, typifies this second phase, when toughness and introspection were still fairly evenly balanced.

The balance didn't last. From 1964 on, there were a series of Bank Holiday riots along the South Coast in which Mods did battle with Rockers, up-dated Teds. Clothes became less important, violence was now the focal point. (*Opposite*) Mods triumph over Rockers at Brighton.

15 *and* 16
The Who were great Mod Heroes (*above*), spending hundreds of pounds each week on Union Jack jackets, Pop Art T-shirts and elaborately striped and patterned shirts. *Below*, vintage Hippie – The Fool, a team of designers, photographed in 1967.

17 *and* 18
Mick Jagger, meanwhile, emerged as the definitive Pop dresser of the sixties. As the decade progressed, he developed from comparative neatness (*above, left*) to flat-out anarchy, culminating in a white mini-dress (*above*) worn for a Hyde Park concert in Summer 1969.

19, 20 *and* 21 Having begun as a genuine breakthrough, Carnaby Street turned into a tourist trap, which picked up on each new style in Pop or High Fashion and turned it into fancy dress. On this page, two typical stunts: *above* the gangster craze, triggered off by the film *Bonnie and Clyde*; *right*, mock Regency, worn here by a pop singer called Beau Brummell.

Military uniforms were slightly different. They started as an early Hippie craze, popularised by Ian Fisk who ran a Portobello Road stall called 'I was Lord Kitchener's Valet'. Then Carnaby Street adopted them and in no time there was a turnover of 50,000 uniforms a week.

22, 23 *and* 24
Jimi Hendrix *(left)* was the epitome of Pop Hippie style – flamboyance and outrage taken as far as possible, with blinding colours and clashing fabrics, wild Afro hairstyle, high-heeled boots and a riot of rings, necklaces and talismans. At the end of the sixties, Hell's Angels *(below)* and Skinheads *(right)* replaced Rockers and Mods respectively. In their physical style, they were direct descendants, and they rioted and clashed very much as before.

25 Cyril Ray has typified the best kind of Savile Row dress. Unconcerned with fashion, he has dressed in essentially the same manner for twenty-five years: unobtrusively but with perfect taste and great care for quality.

with pointed-toe shoes, which pinched the feet, the result was one of agonized, bottled-up confinement and, every time one sneezed, a button popped.

The look had many refinements. As well as its shortness, the jacket had narrow lapels and a rounded, scooped-out hem. The shirts were small-collared and, by the late fifties, button-down. The ties were skinny. Hair was worn short. Everything was skimped – narrow legs, pointed feet, no shoulders.

It was not elegant, no matter what Gee had intended. Aesthetically, it was no great improvement on the High Street, the dark grey undead. But at least it was action – it was new, and a bit flashy, and it became the basic young man's suit of the late fifties, especially in London and the south.

In fact, it was an even greater success than the Teddy Boy look. It wasn't exclusively working-class; it had no delinquent undertones; it was almost respectable. Hard-line Teds would have nothing to do with it, thinking it soft.

More than any previous style, it was classless, not worn by extremists but by jog-along youths in the span from working to middle class, boys with jobs and families and fiancées, boys who carried no razors and didn't swear in front of ladies.

Furthermore, it lasted. Over the next eight years there was a whole sequence of similar styles, all based on short jackets and narrow pants: first the Italian Look itself; then the round-collared Cardin suit, later revived as the Beatle suit; and finally the Mod suit, the first standby of Carnaby Street. Elsewhere, it survived even longer. In black Africa, bum-freezers and pointed-toe shoes are still going strong today. 'You'd be surprised,' says Don McCullin, who has photographed innumerable African wars. 'The number of times I've come up over a sandhill and seen a pair of winklepickers, pointing up at the sky.'

In England, after Cecil Gee had given the look its initial impact, it was taken up and refined by John Michael Ingram, who owned a string of shops called John Michael.

Ingram opened his first shop in 1957, when he was twenty-six, and initially that was the most intriguing thing about him, his age. He wasn't just younger than his competitors – he be-

longed to a totally different generation, the first shopkeeper to be the same age as his customers.

His father was also a menswear retailer, with several shops in Chelsea, and the first John Michael opened on the Kings Road. At the time, Chelsea was just beginning to be fashionable. Suddenly, there was a rash of new bistros, coffee bars and shops. Above all, Mary Quant had opened Bazaar, and was busily traumatizing female fashion. John Michael became her nearest male equivalent.

Compared to Cecil Gee, he was less flamboyant but more sophisticated and more expensive; in short, more middle-class. 'Gee was fun and important but basically bad taste,' he says. 'I tried to get the same excitement but without the same vulgarity.'

He half-succeeded. He wasn't vulgar but he wasn't exciting either. If he never plunged into low comedy, as Gee sometimes did, he never came up with anything as much fun or with as much image as the American Look.

Just the same, he was both important and innovative. 'I created the middle road in male fashion,' he says, not boastfully but just because it's true. 'Before John Michael, the only choice was between boredom on the one hand and fancy dress on the other. There was no sensible compromise.'

Trying to fill this gap, Ingram took the basic Italian shape and removed its exaggerations. It remained short and rather boxy but it wasn't a true bum-freezer any more and it wasn't farcical.

Usually, he made his suits in quiet colours, so as not to be alarming, but with very bright linings, so as not to be dull. Again the balance, the compromise, and you kept your jacket always open and sat askew, sending forth flashes like a kingfisher.

Ingram also made a great thing of striped shirts, and a variety of collars, like the button-down; narrow ties with matching handkerchiefs; and slimmed-down trousers. (Stripes were the most important innovation. Starting with black and white, or navy blue and white, and then graduating to more

exotic shades, they dominated shirt fashion for several years and have been revived repeatedly ever since.)

All of these styles were taken up elsewhere and copied and made successful nationally. Sometimes they would be jazzed up for the teenage market but John Michael's own clientele was mostly in the age range twenty to thirty-five – mediamen, young businessmen and the inhabitants of Chelsea, and those who merely wished for such things: midway adventurers, progressive but cautious, a fashion equivalent to White Liberals.

Ingram's peak years were from about 1959-62 and, during that time, he was the centre of all male fashion. Then John Stephen came along, and Carnaby Street, and the focus shifted. Other faces and other shops appeared in the glossies and on TV, and produced new styles and directions. John Michael passed into the Establishment.

He needn't have minded. Even shorn of glamour, he continued to increase his profits and open new branches. He started a series of shops for a younger public, called Guy, and then another called the Westerner, selling cowboys-and-indians clothes. He designed uniforms for porters and airline employees, and developed a wholesale side, and started a design consultancy. At one time, around 1968, he was growing so fast that he over-stretched himself and nearly went bust. But he recovered quickly and now he is more flourishing than ever.

Whatever his shortcomings as a swashbuckler, his influence has been immense. On a personal level, he was the first in a new style of menswear retailing, the first shopkeeper to sell clothes as something different from cabbages. He was amiable and casual and, when you shopped at John Michael, you felt that you wouldn't be bullied. You could browse and take time and not buy if you didn't want to. You could even enjoy yourself and, in that, although he didn't use the word, Ingram's shops were among the first boutiques.

As a designer, his effect has also been far-reaching. From him, there has stemmed an endless succession of shops, all in his tradition and aiming for roughly the same custom, and

they have been the spine of English fashion, the middle path: Just Men and Cue and Way In, One Up and the Squire Shops and, latterly, Cecil Gee as well, much calmer and more restrained than of old.

They haven't been glamorous, like Blades or Mr Fish, but they have made more money and had more customers and, in the end, they've had a much greater effect on the things that men in general have worn. They have provided the half-way solution that England always settles for. 'All things in moderation', as Ingram says himself.

For myself, I can't say that I have liked John Michael clothes, or bought them. Moderation has usually seemed euphemistic for mediocrity, in fact; but that's a personal judgement, not shared by fashion writers in general: 'I have tried to be civilized,' says Ingram, and he has been.

Still, to return to the late fifties, the Italian Look developed ramifications. Unlike the American style or the Teds, it was taken up by the High Street and sold to businessmen. Naturally, it was much toned down but the basic box-like squatness was still recognizable, and you can go into a multiple and get the same jacket even now.

Beyond suits, the fashion for Italiana extended to sweaters, shoes and pants, that whole area of dress which was now called Casualwear.

At the very end of the fifties, there was a fad for black shirts and white ties, as worn by Cliff Richard on the TV show *Oh, Boy* and, having started out as a teenage craze, this became a replacement for the zoot suit, much favoured by strip-club touts and petty thieves.

It appeared quite a lot in Soho, where Italians stood on the street corners or in doorways, looking like extras from a B-feature movie about the Mafia: black shirts and white ties, shiny suits and shades, and rings on the fingers, chewing gum.

At a less esoteric level, Casualwear meant mostly knitwear and slacks, and wasn't derived direct from Italy but from Italy via Italian America.

It was largely a new phenomenon. In the past, few clothes

had been designed specifically for leisure. At weekends, the working class had dressed up in its best suits and the upper class had dressed down in old tweeds. Either way, it had nothing to do with fashion or design. But now, in the years of Harold Macmillan and 'You've never had it so good', there was more leisure time than ever before, and more money to be spent on it, and Casualwear emerged as a whole separate industry.

Again, as with the suits, the major influence was Brioni. From about 1950 on, he had begun to experiment with different shapes and fabrics for knitwear – crewnecks and V-necks, shaggy mohair sweaters and cashmere cardigans. He changed the concept of knitwear from baggy sweaters and old moth-eaten cardies into Fashion, and the mass market caught on fast.

Primarily, Casualwear was aimed at teenagers. In America, all the Philadelphia high-school groups wore V-neck sweaters and Italian loafers and, in England, Adam Faith adopted roughly the same look. But there was no sense of teen exclusiveness, as there had been with the Teddy Boy uniform – casuals were soft and cosy, essentially smug, and Perry Como could wear them as easily as Fabian or Frankie Avalon.

Not all Casualwear was Italian-inspired. Some was all-American, like blazers with shiny brass buttons, and striped, Ivy League jackets, and bold-checked shirts, evocative of square dances and lumberjacks; and some was homegrown, like the fashion for suede, both in jackets and shoes, and cavalry twill trousers.

The absolute centre of Casualwear, however, and of teenage fashion in general, was jeans.

Of course, these weren't new in themselves but their role had changed completely. Before the fifties, they had been purely for working in, like overalls; now they had become a badge.

Traditionally, the best-quality jeans have been American Levis but during the fifties these weren't yet available in England. Accordingly the trick was to get a pair sent you and then sit in a bath with them on, until they fitted you like

skins, and bleach them and hang them out in the sun, until they were faded.

The great thing about them, and about jeans in general, was that they remained inaccessible to adults. Unlike other Casualwear, they couldn't be diluted. Bum-freezers might be softened by John Michael Ingram, and finished off by the High Street; crewneck sweaters and slip-on shoes might be mocked by a world of paunch-filled pullovers, slippers and shortie car-coats; jeans were jeans regardless.

But that, by default, explains the Italian boom: it was a leveller, a cutting-back of whatever identity teenagers had achieved as Teds.

The first explosion had come from the jungle, stirred up by the kids themselves and made without compromise; now business had recognized the energy and was trying to harness it and convert it into middle-aged terms – a parents' view of what adolescents should be.

Just as, in rock 'n roll, the force released by Elvis Presley and Little Richard was railroaded and turned into Dick Clark's American Bandstand and Pat Boone, so drapes and luminous socks were superseded by cardigans. The tribal strength was eroded, Sampson's long hair shorn. Everything was made clean, polite and Casualwear said *I am the kind that gives my seat to ladies, that brushes my teeth, that prays.*

Only two minorities refused to tag along: ton-up boys, later to be Rockers, and Beatniks.

Ton-up boys were the natural successors to Teds, in attitude, language and values. Only their uniform was changed. Instead of mock-Edwardiana, they took their style from Marlon Brando's film *The Wild Ones,* and from the Hell's Angels who lay behind it, and they wore black leather jackets, with studding on the back, and high black boots. They rode on motorbikes and travelled in packs, and lived off greasy eggs and chips, and hung out in transport cafes, and liked blondes with big breasts, and still worshipped Elvis Presley.

In the late fifties, a firm called Anello & Davide, who made theatrical boots in the Charing Cross Road, began to promote

the Cuban-heeled, or Chelsea, boot and that became part of the uniform as well.

It was a beautiful, ornate and decadent object, elastic-sided, with built-up heels, maybe two inches high, which gave it a deeply hollowed instep. It spoke of heroics, of gun-fights in the noonday sun, of violence and sex together – and ton-up boys, who saw themselves as desperadoes, loved it. Not only ton-up boys, either – less stylized groups took it up as well, kids without motorbikes. Soon it had spread throughout the whole spectrum of teenage hooliganism and flash. Then the multiple shoestores adopted it and made it almost respectable. They gave it a winklepicker toe and lost the depth of the instep, which was its great splendour, and the Chelsea boot became part of the standard blue jeans and hair-oil uniform, especially in the north.

At the same time, the first Beats were emerging. They were purely an American imitation, gleaned from Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg, and most of them were concentrated in London, although each provincial town would have its own cell, maybe twenty beards strong, huddled together in basements, where they listened to poetry and jazz and looked solemn.

In the bohemian tradition, they wore anti-dress: long hair, rancid old sweaters and paint-stained jeans, bare feet or sandals, and Ban the Bomb badges. They wished for profundity and originality and sometimes, rather nervously, because they weren't used to it, they would pass a joint around.

For themselves, they didn't matter much. In America, the movement grew quite large and meant something, paved the way for real changes; but in England, there were never more than a couple of thousand full-timers and they were always a bit of a joke, tame fall-guys for cartoonists.

Their influence, however, was considerable. In the long term they proved to be forerunners, advance warnings of the Hippies to come, in their long hair and beards, their total contempt for straight society, their conformity within anarchy.

In the short term, they also provided a base for hordes of

part-timers, who took the high seriousness of the Beat stance and turned it into games. A generation of art students, and those who hoped to be taken for art students, and rebellious sixth-formers, and Aldermaston marchers in general joined in the pretence. They grew their hair a bit long and produced paint-stains for their jeans and mouthed a few slogans about squares and warmongers. But instead of studying Zen Buddhism and immersing themselves in Thelonious Monk, they settled for getting drunk and jumping up and down to Trad (English traditional jazz).

They wore impossibly baggy sweaters and, often, battered bowler hats with Acker written on them, after Acker Bilk, the clarinettist. They went on marches, as much for the sex as the politics and, altogether, had a jolly good time.

University students, meanwhile, tended more towards the duffel coat, which was also anti-dress, but tacitly so. It had first become popular in the army surplus days after the war and then, in 1951, had been brought out commercially, for the use of 'gentlemen, gentleman farmers, mariners, men of leisure and intellectuals'.

At first, they lived up to this and Winston Churchill bought one for his birthday, complete with fur collar. But gradually they became a uniform for students and readers of *The Outsider*.* With their hoods and toggles and utter shapelessness, they were at least defiant in their ugliness. They weren't a gesture like bohemian anti-dress, aimed at whipping up rage and horror; rather they were a quittance, a denial of all interest, to be worn with curry stains down the front and the poems of Rimbaud in the pocket, so saying *I am above vanity, above flesh; I move in higher regions.*

On the surface, then, the late fifties formed no obvious overall patterns, and gave no warning of Carnaby Street to come. With a couple of exceptions, in fact, they seemed like a time of retraction, full of false starts and waverings and cop-outs.

All the time, however, so gradually that you couldn't really put your finger on what was happening, the level of general

* Colin Wilson's romantic study of the self-made outcast, a major cult book of the period.

male interest in clothes was rising. There might be nothing as radical as the Teds; but the industry as a whole was beginning to stir.

The success of John Michael was one manifestation, and the boom in Casualwear, and the IMBEX exhibitions at Earls Court. But, basically, the changes weren't definable – there seemed a bit more colour on the streets, that's all, and a growing relaxation. People were ceasing to believe that dressing up was evil.

Everything was loosening. As sexual and social standards became more flexible, and England settled into Wondermac cosiness, it was inevitable that dress became more permissive as well. The old strictures hardly applied any more. It wasn't necessary for clothes to announce one's status, nor that they should stay the same for ever.

This last was the biggest shift of all – the speed with which styles changed. Before the war, any new fashion had been good for a decade at least; now it might disappear within months.

So it was, when George Melly went to Cecil Gee and asked for a pair of yellow socks, that the salesman stared at him and smirked. 'Oh no, sir,' he said. 'Yellow socks are out,' and Melly went away blushing.

In and Out: it was a new concept, and fascinating. From then on, Carnaby Street was inevitable.

7

Chelsea

In the years after the war, as in the thirties, Soho remained the undisputed centre of London bohemia. Its heroes were Dylan Thomas, Francis Bacon and Johnny Minton; its citadels the York Minster (the French pub) and Muriels; its fulcrum alchohol; and its uniform consisted of baggy sweaters, baggy corduroy trousers and sandals, the classic arty costume.

Towards the mid-fifties, however, the balance began to shift from Soho to Chelsea and then clothes began to matter much more. Basically, the reason was that the whole bohemian vision was changing, under the influence of the Teds and the new-wave American movies, especially those starring James Dean and Marlon Brando. To a large extent, the Artist was being replaced by the Hustler, as the central fantasy, and the Soho romance was starting to lose its attractions. Starving in garrets, pouring out one's soul through a pen or paint brush and drinking oneself to an early death – such picturesque squalors seemed somehow less heroic and, in their place, there sprang up a vogue of toughness.

In the style of Mailer and Jackson Pollock, artists began to come on like heavyweight boxers. It became chic to cut corners, to gamble and dabble in illegalities and carry an air of mystery, to know gangsters by their first names. The crucial new word was Cool, which was interchangeable with Hip, and they involved charm and style and self-sufficiency, which in turn involved money and status symbols. In other words, image, and with image, there came clothes.

I don't mean that the older style died out, or that it doesn't survive even now. The veterans carried on very much as before, trundling from the French to Muriels, and from

Muriels to Wheelers, and from Wheelers back to the French again, and there were the same discussions and arguments, the same drunken scenes, the same baggy pants. From time to time a new stirrer would be added, like Brendan Behan or Frank Norman, and they were always well surrounded.

Just the same, it had lost conviction. These were tired old rituals now and, more and more, Soho turned into middle-aged territory.

Chelsea, by contrast, was very young. Until the fifties the district had been nothing very special, just a fairly smart middle-class retreat. No doubt that helped to make it attractive, the fact that it was uncharted territory. At any rate, a migration began to the Kings Road and, by 1955, a new circuit was established, based upon a pub called the Markham Arms and a coffee bar called the Fantasy, and combining elements of traditional Soho bohemia with romanticized crime and *Vile Bodies* slumming.

At first, the game was distinctly upper class, made up of a few discontented debs, notably Suna Portman and Lady Jane Vane-Tempest-Stewart, and a gaggle of public schoolboys, in search of riot. Together, they threw a lot of parties, at which criminals and jazz musicians and black men would be present, and they had love affairs, listened to Elvis Presley. Some of them dabbled in chicanery, some made exotic marriages, some turned homosexual. The ambience, altogether, was more evocative of Montparnasse than of Soho's Greenwich Village and it all made marvellous copy for the gossip columns, who reported each fresh extravagance and invented something called the Chelsea Set, who were the Bright Young Things of their time.

At the centre, there was the aforesaid Suna Portman and Mark Sykes and for years, they were a fifties equivalent to Mick Jagger and Marianne Faithfull.

Sykes was an ex-Etonian, with not much capital but a great deal of charm and nerve, and was the leader of a definite group: himself, Simon Hodgson, Robert Jacobs and Christopher Gibbs. Together, they went into business, officially described as property redevelopment, and they made enough

money to live roughly as they wished, which meant wide. They took a lot of holidays, gambled and drank, and spent a lot on clothes.

Simon Hodgson is good about the period, and about Sykes in particular: 'He needed to be young, poor thing. He was frightfully funny and used to do absolutely anything he could get away with, marvellous trips abroad and cars and clothes. He got away with murder for years.

'He adored getting his name in the papers, which one rather disapproved of. He was always giving interviews, saying that he was going to buy an old dinghy, moor it in the middle of the Thames and write his memoirs on it. He was going to call them *Lilies That Fester*.

'We were all very spoiled and very tiresome. Most of us were subsidized by our families and our lives were built around going to parties, and getting drunk, and meeting gangsters. Nobody had ever spoken to gangsters before – they seemed rather chic. But we were really frightfully snobbish. Everyone had to be rich, funny or famous, or at least notorious.'

There were japes. On one occasion, Sykes and Hodgson fell on their knees in front of a parson, outside Sloane Square tube station. He blessed them and moved on without a word, and the Markham was electrified. Or again, they waltzed together twice round the floor at a pompous debs' party and then dashed straight out the door: 'That sort of thing,' says Hodgson. 'People used to think it frightfully amusing but it wasn't, of course. It was just rude.'

Put like that, it all sounds an embarrassment, and it was, but there was also energy in it, and real celebration: 'The war took so long to die. Even ten years later, one was still caught up in the aftermath. Then people suddenly said "Gosh, we're safe at last" and began to splash out.'

So there were follies, and extravagant balls, like the one at Petworth, when the whole house was lit by the spotlights on the Turners, and a series of fancy-dress parties, which dragged on till dawn and only ended when the booze ran out: *The Sun Also Rises*.

And there were clothes, lots of them, split into two distinct types. 'There was a terrifically strict line drawn between formal and casual clothes,' Hodgson says. 'One used to go to one's father's tailor for suits and then buy outrageous fun clothes as well.'

Fun clothes, for the most part, meant Ted-inspired. 'For the first time, poor people's clothes were imitated by the rich. We all had long hair, or longer than anyone's else's at the time. and very tight trousers that showed our cocks. That was the focal point, the crotch; and then, if we wanted to pile outrage upon outrage, we wore blue suede shoes as well.'

Taking their wardrobe as a whole, there were elements of all three pre-war traditions – dandyism in the suits, bohemianism in the slumming, aestheticism in the love of gesture – and of the post-war Pop tradition as well.

Among the Sykes gang, the best-dressed was Christopher Gibbs, who was a few years younger than the rest and who, over the next fifteen years, remained consistently the most innovatory and wide-ranging dresser of all.

Like Mark Sykes, he had been to Eton, where he had been tremendously dandified and had sported a monocle, and a silver-topped cane with blue tassels, and had handed out visiting cards. Expelled in the same term as Sykes, he went to the Sorbonne and then arrived back in London in 1956. He was eighteen.

He was very flash. Sometimes he just wore tight jeans or fancy dress, like the others; but mostly his tastes were more elaborate: suits with double-breasted waistcoats and cloth-covered buttons, and velvet ties, and striped Turkish shirts with stiff white collars, and cravats. Above all, he had a passion for carnations and was forever buying new strains, pink-and-yellow, or green-ink, or purple with red flecks. 'I must have thought I was an aesthete,' he says. 'A *gentleman* aesthete. But I was a bit grubby as well; a dandy with bitten fingernails.'

Later on, he was to help spawn another Chelsea group, the dandies of the sixties, including people like Michael Rainey, Tara Browne and David Mlinaric. At the time, however,

being so young, he was slightly overshadowed by Sykes and Hodgson, and the most mythic of all Kings Road dressers was Kim Waterfield, who didn't belong in any set.

He was a somewhat mysterious figure, and the versions of his background and early career are numberless. But when Chelsea became fashionable, he was already rich and toughly good-looking, though small, and he drove around in big cars, with a variety of beautiful girls inside. 'He was an adventurer,' says Simon Hodgson, 'but amusing.'

His clothes were famous. Essentially, he dressed himself as a caricature of the English country squire, with hacking jackets and cavalry twills and chukka boots, which he scrubbed and polished until they became a gleaming, lemony yellow. For this, the columns called him Dandy Kim.

In the end, he went to France and suffered an unpleasantness at Jack Warner's villa, for which he went to jail. During his Chelsea period, however, he had cut such a dashing figure that he hasn't been forgotten. Even now, he is much reverenced and romanced about, and his collected feats, if all of them were true, would make him an amalgam of the Count d'Orsay, Casanova and Raffles.

Beyond the gossip-column Chelsea set, which was small and exclusive, there was also an outer circle, made up of orthodox bohemians and would-be artists, provincials hot for sex and East Enders hot for wealth, and a few Americans hot for experience and, year by year, the Kings Road continued to gather speed.

Even so, it was still confined to a handful of hang-outs – Bazaar and John Michael, and a couple of pubs and coffee bars, and a boutique called Dale Cavana, a most camp establishment in Kinnerton Street, with its windows full of skin-tight trousers, lacy briefs and cards saying 'For you, monsieur'.

Towards the end of the decade, the first Chelsea group began to break up. Suna Portman went off to Morocco and returned with strange tales of hashish; Simon Hodgson got married and moved to Paris; Mark Sykes went to Australia. By the early sixties, when Hodgson dropped in at the Markham to see what was left of his contemporaries, he was appalled.

'They all looked so seedy, so sad. Worst of all, they looked so old – I remember thinking *Oh my God, was this ever me?*'

But by then, Hodgson's generation had already been superseded. In the summer of 1959 a second cycle had begun.

It was a very hot and very long summer, the kind of English summer that happens no more than twice in a decade and, during the course of it, everything seemed to relax.

There were lots of parties in back gardens, and there was the first crop of bistros, like La Popote and Alexanders, and there was a flush of bright clothes. Somehow there was a new sense of certainty. 'It was as though the whole English personality had changed,' says Alexander Plunket-Greene. 'The war was over at last, really and truly, and you saw businessmen in shantung jackets, and people in pointed-toe shoes and silks. All of a sudden, London felt like San Francisco or Rome.'

That is an exaggeration, I think, born of hindsight At the time, it seemed simply a wonderful summer, in which people were happy and new things seemed possible, in Chelsea at least, though not necessarily in Neasden or Clapham Junction. It was only in retrospect that it came to seem more, almost a rebirth.

Nevertheless, it was a watershed. From then on, Chelsea became more than just a group of friends swopping outrage and its ripples began to spread outwards. People came to it specially, just to watch its action. Hustlers of many kinds converged on it and prepared to cut out a stake, and the pavements filled up with girls in jeans and long blonde hair, and tourists added it to their agendas. It was famous.

Even when the summer finished, it left its legacy and, from then on, things snowballed. With each year there were more new boutiques and more new bistros and coffee bars, record stores and fashionable pubs, until the Kings Road became symbolic, all over the world: the last word in frivolity, flash and longed-for sin.

In that sense, Plunket-Greene is right: 1959 was the turning point, the year the war ended. If the dream of Swinging London was born at any one time or place, it was in the heat and release of that summer.

8

Carnaby Street, Part One

In the beginning, Bill Green was a photographer, specializing in stage portraiture. Then, during the war, he got involved in weight lifting and, after he'd been demobbed, he began to photograph muscle boys and wrestlers, doing figure studies for the male magazines. For this, he called himself Vince.

At first, he had problems: 'In those days, it was all very perilous, shooting the male nude. Several photographers had got into serious trouble that way. So I reached a compromise – I made my models wear briefs, and I had them specially made up from cut-down Marks & Spencer roll-ons. They were skimpy but ever so comfy and they caused a terrific reaction among my models and my readers. Everyone was thrilled.

'After a time, I began to make the briefs myself and I thought perhaps I should sell them commercially. So, in 1950, I took out an advert in the *Daily Mirror*. It came out on Saturday and, on the Monday morning, I took £200 worth of orders.'

Very quickly, selling briefs was taking so much of his time that his photography was swamped. In 1951, he started a mail-order business, working from a studio in Manchester Street, then he went to France: 'This was during the existential phase. All the boys were wearing black sweaters and black jeans, which were unheard of in England. Over here, everyone still dreamed of imported Levis, so I could see a potential and I brought out a catalogue of sweaters and pants.'

These were also successful and, in 1954, Green opened a shop in Newburgh Street, which was just round the corner from Carnaby Street, which in turn was just behind Regent Street. He called the shop Vince.

It was a pretty shabby district. Technically, it may have

belonged in Soho but it had nothing colourful or sinful, nothing remotely exotic. It was full of attics and small workshops, scuffling tailors and locksmiths.

From Bill Green's angle, its attractions were simple: the rents were cheap and Newburgh Street was just next to Marshall Street baths, where all the muscle boys and butch trade trained. As they came out, they were confronted by a dazzle of hipster pants, expensive tight sweaters (about £7), briefs and shirts in bright reds, yellows and purples.

This was the start of Drag, not in the transvestite sense, but as used by the menswear trade, to mean fashionable fancy dress. For the period, it was all quite outrageous and, straightaway, Vince became the butt of much music-hall hilarity: 'The only shop where they measure your inside leg each time you buy a tie', said George Melly and, ten years later, David Frost was saying it still.

The camp element was undeniable, but Vince had other qualities. At a time when men's shops were almost all pompous, it was fun, and so were its clothes: lurid and sometimes badly made but, at least, never boring. 'I always put the emphasis on impact, not make,' says Green. 'I used materials that had never been used before – lots of velvets and silks, trousers made of bed-ticking, and I was the first with pre-faded denims – and I made everything as colourful and bold as I could.

'You'd be surprised by our customers, too. Everyone thought we only sold to Chelsea homosexuals but, in actual fact, we catered to a very wide public, within an age range of about twenty-five to forty. They weren't teenagers, because teenagers couldn't meet our prices, but artists and theatricals, muscle boys, and celebrities of every kind.

'I don't like to name-drop but my customers included Peter Sellers, John Gielgud and Lionel Bart. The King of Denmark bought swimming trunks from me; Picasso ordered a pair of suede trousers; Lord Snowdon used me for most of his trousseau.'

Green is quite right – not all his custom was homosexual. But if he'd been in business before the war, it would have

been, and that's what made Vince new and important: it sold stuff that could once have been worn by no one but queers, and extremely blatant ones at that; now the same things were bought by heteros as well.

Behind this, obviously, there was a major shift in male identity. 'One of the things about us,' says Simon Hodgson, speaking of Chelsea, 'nobody gave a damn what sex you were. Everyone realized that we're all a bit of everything.'

In other words, men were coming to terms with the feminine sides of themselves. They were beginning not to be afraid. Narcissism and flirtation and cattiness – all these things had become acceptable as male components, in a way that the Victorian age would have found horrific, and skin-tight pants expressed the change.

This was yet another facet in the same central break-up, the crumbling of the English structure. Nothing seemed fixed any more – all the roles were blurring, and there was an evolving of the whole concept of what makes men attractive. It seemed much less important, suddenly, to look like a he-man, to have biceps like grapefruit and hairs on your chest; if you were good in bed that was all that counted and there, clearly, a certain ambiguity was no bad thing.

Of course, as yet, this was on a very small scale. Soho and Chelsea, and Vince's celebrities 'of every kind', were hardly typical of the country as a whole and the new expansiveness was unthought of outside London.

Still, once the first breach has been made, the cracks are bound to get wider and, within a few years, the same sexual relaxation was to form the basis for Carnaby Street and all its triumphs. Drag was worn by teenagers, suburban swingers, middle-aged tourists from Idaho.

To an extent, in fact, all male fashion of the sixties was homosexual-derived. In that, the retired Indian Army majors and lorry drivers were quite correct, yelling 'Fairies' and 'Poufs'. They remembered the signals of their youth and now that the message had altered and complexified, it was natural that they should be confused.

In that sense, Bill Green was a seminal figure. He was not

a great designer, aesthetically, nor a great theorist and he probably had no clear idea of what he represented. Nevertheless, his was a vital breakthrough: 'I invented a long-felt need,' he says and, despite the non sequitur, it's true.

Vince was also a major force towards informality, as well as ambivalence. For the first time, leisure wear became high fashion. Sweaters and jeans began to be chic, not yet worn for business, perhaps, but quite all right for evenings-out or parties. 'Male costume evolves by adopting a sports costume for ordinary wear,' as James Laver has written,* and that's exactly what was happening in Newburgh Street.

On paper, Bill Green should have made his fortune. Apart from his shop, his mail-order business was flourishing, too, and he started a wholesale business, with contracts at Marshall & Snelgrove and Macys in New York. When the Carnaby Street boom came in, one would have thought, he should have been made.

It didn't happen like that. 'I understand promotion,' he says. 'I could photograph something dull and make it look glamorous and sell it. But I never learned business. I didn't know how to set things up so that I'd receive the proper benefit. I needed some tough Jewish pusher behind me, to cash in, but I never found him.'

He did all right until the early sixties but then, when Carnaby Street took flight, he began to flag. He was in his fifties and, where once he had led, he could hardly keep up. Teenagers swarmed all over him and drove away his own clientele, now middle-aged; his styles looked oddly old-fashioned. Quite simply, he had lost the knack and, in 1967, he moved out to Thayer Street in Marylebone. Finally, in 1969 he went out of business altogether.

Now he runs a restaurant called Aunties, near Warren Street. He is sixty-one, with short grey hair brushed up in a semi-quiff and a somewhat melancholic smile. He is likeable; not at all embittered. 'If I was in menswear today, I wouldn't even know where to begin,' he says. 'I wouldn't understand what was happening.'

* James Laver, *Dandies*.

When I ate there, his restaurant was almost empty. For dessert, there was chocolate mousse or strawberry tart or fresh oranges, and he ate the lot, everything that was left over, mixed together in a single bowl. 'I only hope that when you write your book, the Jewish pusher who missed me in 1955 will realize at last and be sorry,' he said, and he began to clear away the plates, a dignified man.

In a way, he cuts a parallel figure to Bill Haley, the first rock 'n roll star. Just as Haley, a fat man with a kiss curl and five children, laid down the groundwork and was then blasted out by Elvis Presley, so Green was replaced by John Stephen.

Stephen was a Glaswegian,whose father owned a confectionery business, and he came to London when he was nineteen, to work in the military department of Moss Bros. After that, he became a salesman at Vince ('Not much good,' says Green. 'Always dreaming of bigger things'), and he managed a shop in Notting Hill Gate and then, in 1957, he started his own company, working out of a second-floor room in Back Street, and called it His Clothes.

At the beginning, his styles weren't unlike Vince – the same rainbow colours, the same tightness and the same camp outrage: pink denim jeans, lilac shirts, striped matelot T-shirts.

What was different, straightaway, was the scale. Bill Green, basically, had thought in terms of a single successful, gossip-column boutique; John Stephen intended a holocaust. From the word go, he meant to turn menswear upside down, change everything. 'My ambition is simple,' he told *Men's Wear*, when he was just beginning to expand. 'I want to own more shops than anybody else.'

It was strange. In his business dealings he was said to be sharp and decisive but, when you met him, he seemed paralysed with shyness. He had a most beautiful face, in the James Dean manner, with curly hair and hollowed cheeks, and solitary eyes, and he spoke in a curious, high-pitched key. When he shook your hand, he couldn't look at you.

Yet his ambitions were infinite. When he had worked in Notting Hill Gate, he had doubled as a night-waiter in Fortes, saving up to start on his own and, once he'd achieved that

much, he used to put in a hundred hours a week. 'That's why he was a genius, because he followed his obsessions,' says Michael Fish, who once worked for him. 'He was like Picasso or Michelangelo or Adolf Hitler.'

Today, looking back, he can give no explanation of what drove him, or why he cared so passionately. 'It was something I believed in,' he says and that, more or less, is as verbal as he gets.

My own guess, however, is that his hunger was for success in general, rather than for recognition as a designer or for anything specifically to do with clothes. As I see him, he had a built-in restlessness and couldn't ever have settled for orthodoxy – a steady job and a semi-detached. Somehow or other, he had to find an escape route and menswear provided it. No doubt he also liked clothes, enjoyed selling and designing them but, if circumstances had been different, he might equally well have been a pop manager, or an adman, or a property developer.

Still, having made his choice, he immersed himself totally. Because he was young himself, he perceived that basic changes could only come through teenagers. Adults were too scared ever to take a lead; kids had no such inhibitions and Stephen set out to get them.

He was not successful immediately. Holed up in Beak Street he struggled for a time and then, just as he was getting himself established, he went to lunch and left the electric fire on. By the time he got back, his entire stock was in flames.

He wasn't sidetracked for long. Within a few months, he had moved round the corner into Carnaby Street and reopened. This time he was in direct competition with Vince and he won. Everything that he did, he did it faster and cheaper. At first, his trade was largely camp but soon pop stars like Cliff Richard and Billy Fury came to him, bringing their fans behind them.

To reach the teenage market, Stephen turned His Clothes into something equivalent to rock 'n roll. All the traditional standards – wear, finish, craftsmanship – were made second-

ary to the instant, and he changed styles monthly, weekly, even daily.

He also cut his prices. On an average, he charged £7 to £10 for jackets, £3 to £5 for trousers and about the same for shirts, and compared to John Michael or Vince, this worked out at around half as cheap again.

Above all, he made his shops like amusement arcades. He had records blaring as loud as they would go, kaleidoscopic window displays, garments hung around the open doorways and spilling out across the pavements, in imitation of St Tropez. For the first time shopping ceased to be a chore. Instead of ducking in and out quickly, kids would go along especially, as a treat, and trail slowly along the parade, fingering the clothes in the doorways, dazzled by colours and deafened by Pop. Inside, there was more, infinite brightness and newness and glamour, and they would be drawn in helplessly. Clothes had become an adventure.

There were other ploys, lots of gimmicks and publicity stunts. But this was all embellishment. Underneath, the central equation was that, every time you walked past a John Stephen window, there was something new and loud in it, and when you counted out your money, you found you could afford it.

Very quickly he had opened a second branch, also in Carnaby Street and, seeing the signals, other boutiques like Donis and Domino Male moved in alongside him. By the end of 1961, Stephen had four shops, and had expanded on to Regent Street, and Carnaby Street had turned into a definite menswear colony.

Somewhere along the line, the word *boutique* had come in, although no one now seems sure who used it first. Partly, it was used because a lot of early Carnaby Street styles were French-inspired; partly out of camp; but in any case, it caught on immensely and, by the early sixties, even the multiple stores were calling departments boutiques.

In 1962, a range of His Clothes was modelled by Billy Walker, the heavyweight, and this was also important. Walker, at the time, was still in his Golden Boy phase, the great hope

of British boxing, and he was worshipped so much that not even pink denims could sully his manhood. Huge blow-ups of him in drag appeared in all Stephen's windows, and in the press, and they worked wonders. From then on, Carnaby Street seemed almost respectable.

But the floodgates didn't open fully until after the Beatles. In 1962, they cut *Love Me Do*. By the following summer, Beatlemania was raging at full force and the great teenage boom was under way, a cult that turned Carnaby Street from a backwater into a massive worldwide madness.

I can't overpitch this – the Beatles changed everything. Before them, all teenage life and, therefore, fashion, existed in spasms; after them, it was an entity, a separate society. Therefore, the Beatles were more important in the rise of Carnaby Street than Stephen himself. They were the deep-down force, the release; Stephen was merely the medium by which it was transmitted, a middleman of the right talents, in the right place, at the right time.

The Beatles' actual clothes were influential as well – round-necked jackets dominated teenage fashion for over a year and they made Chelsea boots more popular than ever. But that was secondary. Their power wasn't as trend-setters but went much deeper. Any fashions that they started were just a side-effect.

Nor was this power confined to adolescents. The hysteria might be teenage but they caught the attention of everyone, in every class and age-group, and it was they who raised up the godhead Youth.

Suddenly, kids were the focus. From being completely ignored, except as slogans in sermons, political speeches and sociological treatises, they became the centre of rapt attention, to be studied and analysed and aped.

Media tried frantically to court them. New TV shows were created, like *Ready, Steady, Go*!; pimpled youths, myself included, were signed up by the hundredweight to be journalists; politicians queued up to be photographed with Ringo Starr, or just to get his autograph. Out of nowhere, the word Young had become the highest praise possible. Young novel-

ists, young film-makers, young businessmen – they all cleaned up and, on their thirtieth birthdays, men went out alone and got very drunk indeed.

As far as teenagers themselves were concerned, such adulation was no doubt very flattering. More to the point, however, was the fact that business had finally woken up to them and was making real attempts to get through to them.

Already in the fifties, as I've said before, this had been tried. But then the businessmen had worked by their own values. They had produced what they thought kids *ought* to like and left it at that. Hence the inanities of Casualwear, or fifties English Pop: products were spewed forth endlessly, more or less at random, in the knowledge that eventually, by the law of averages, something was bound to catch on.

Now all that was changed. The teenage market was analysed carefully, and its attitudes observed, and kids were finally given things they might actually want. A new generation of entrepreneurs arose, people like Brian Epstein, manager of the Beatles, and Andrew Loog Oldham, first manager and record producer of the Rolling Stones, and Ronan O'Rahilly, organizer of Radio Caroline. Like John Stephen, they were younger, brighter and altogether more involved than their predecessors.

This didn't mean that teenagers weren't exploited any more. Very likely they were hustled worse than ever; but at least the exploitation was less crude, a bit less irrelevant, and didn't come from contempt. Epstein and Oldham and Stephen might get rich but they weren't cigar-smoking baldies, simpering and smirking, with one hand in the till.

At first, therefore, Carnaby Street was not a clip joint, or not excessively; in fact, it was very exciting. Just to be able to turn off Regent Street and plunge oneself into so much colour and dazzle and commotion, such a carnival – after a hundred and fifty years of greyness, it was too new and had too much energy not to be attractive.

Soon enough, the euphoria was gone. Within a couple of years, all the freshness would disappear and Carnaby Street would become a tourist trap, a joke in bad taste. But that

belongs in a later chapter. For the moment, it was enough that it existed, a teenage street at last and, on Saturday afternoons, it was jammed from end to end, sardine-tight.

As for John Stephen himself, he became very wealthy indeed. By 1963 he owned eighteen shops and had spread himself all over central London, and on into the suburbs. At the same time, he was making tie-ups in America and Europe, and getting into wholesale, and being endlessly interviewed and filmed and photographed. His Clothes was worth £1 million and the *Daily Mirror* called him King Carnaby, the *Observer* the Million-Pound Mod.

In addition, he was creating a series of new fashions, or at least picking up on continental fashions and camping them up for London. There were fleecy sweaters, with an unusually long pile, as worn by Cliff Richard, and round-necked jackets, as worn by the Beatles, and leather jackets, as worn by the Rolling Stones, and wide-cord trousers, student caps and diaphanous knickers, all in wildest confusions of fabric and colour. Above all, there were hipster trousers, cut so tight and so low that the backs came halfway up your arse and the fronts framed your genitals like a spotlight.

A whole new range of fabric came into use – suedes, leathers and corduroys, velvets and satins. Before, these might have been used for specific garments – suede jackets, for instance, or cord trousers. But now they turned up in different guises. There were cord shirts and velvet caps and satin underwear, and leather, which had been reserved for thuggishness, became high fashion and has remained so. In fact, it has been one of the basic ingredients, returning in various forms for season after season.

But Stephen's success wasn't based on any one garment. His speed, his flexibility, his nerve – these were the qualities that kept him ahead of his rivals, and his gifts as a designer were merely icing.

As it happened, these gifts were fairly marginal. His basic vision was splendid; his actual clothes mostly mediocre.

By comparison with most of his competitors, he had one advantage at least, in that he took some trouble with making

and his stuff didn't usually fall apart the first time you wore it; but after that, the problems began.

For a start, as I've said, most of his styles weren't original but derived from the Continent, and from France in particular. The fleecy sweaters, for instance, had been done by Brioni, and the round-necked jackets by Cardin, and hipsters had ruled St Tropez for years.

By itself, this didn't matter very much, because fashion is always a matter of cross-fertilization, of influence and counter-influence, and constant originality is almost impossible. So it was inevitable that Stephen would adapt from other sources; the only trouble was, his adaptations were so crude and so vulgar.

In the effort never to lose speed or excitement, he got stuck in the visual equivalent of continuous triple forte. All subtleties were forgotten, any possible pleasures of texture or line. Instead, there was automatic frenzy. Each new style was made wilder, more gimmicky than the one before; each window screamed louder than its neighbour. In no time, a limit had been reached and, from then on, the effect was like a jammed car-horn, blaring so ceaselessly and mindlessly that, finally, one doesn't even hear it.

Again, it must be said that the competition was even worse, if that is any excuse. At any rate, between the lot of them, they took Carnaby Street's real energies and turned them into burlesque.

But then, perhaps that misses the point: Carnaby Street was not about aesthetics, after all, or civilized taste; it wasn't even about clothes; it was a moment, a combustion. Later on, there would be time enough to step back and be rational; right now, one was swept along by force.

So John Stephen triumphed, and the rest of the street along with him. Other firms kept moving in, like Paul's Male Boutique and Lord John and Irvine Sellars, and soon the whole street seemed filled with clothes, and all the adjoining streets as well.

And everyone shopped there: everyone, as they say, who was anyone. Apart from the mass of teenagers, milling about

like a cast of thousands, there were pop stars and movie stars, and the finest flowers of the media: admen, publicists and journalists, photographers and the employees of BBC-TV. And, beyond them, there were tourists and trippers, and always a continental film crew, shooting a documentary, and seekers after action, hotfoot from Euston or Kings Cross. All of these, and Anthony Armstrong-Jones.

The effect was not limited to London. In the provinces each town sprouted a rash of small boutiques, called Fab Gear or Swinging Scene or some such and, for the first time, interest in male fashion became something on a national scale.

Outside England the ripples were even stronger. In America, and all over Europe, Beatlemania took hold and, in its wake, there was a wild enthusiasm for all things British and teenage. Accordingly, Carnaby Street was fantasized and hyped and, finally, elevated to the status of a Great Sight of London, on a par with St Paul's or Westminster Abbey.

In that sense, there's no doubt that Carnaby Street was responsible for the worldwide boom in male fashion during the sixties, and shops and boutiques everywhere began to copy it, and often to outstrip it, in garishness and hysteria. But the point is, it wasn't the clothes themselves that achieved such impact; it was the force behind them, unleashed by the Beatles: the monster Pop.

9

Hardy Amies and Pierre Cardin

Throughout the 1950s, as I have said elsewhere, the mass High Street trade had been dimly conscious that changes were needed in its approach and had made a few cautious sorties into the unknown; but, when it came to the crunch, it had always drawn back, alarmed.

In 1961, however, there was at last a commitment: Hepworths, one of the largest of the multiple tailors, hired Hardy Amies as design consultant.

This was big news: with the possible exception of Norman Hartnell, Amies was the best-known women's couturier in England and had designed frequently for the Queen, and for other members of the royal family. Of all the figures in English fashion, his name was the most impressive and, by acquiring him, Hepworths gave menswear a respectability that it had never had before, certainly not at the High Street level.

Where all male fashion had seemed somehow distasteful before, it now attained to a certain status. A Hardy Amies label, after all, provided a link, however remote, between bank clerks and office workers and the world of corgis and garden parties.

Amies himself was in his fifties, the son of an architect, and his career followed all the right patterns – public school, lieutenant-colonel in the war, premises in Savile Row. Without question, he cut a most distinguished figure.

As early as 1957 he had begun to design a few ranges of shirts and ties, and they had gone down well, without causing any riots. Then Hepworths approached him. In Amies' own view, they probably saw him initially as a short-term gimmick, a short-cut to some easy publicity and, to this end, they

financed a special show at the Savoy, at which Amies unveiled his New Man.

The designs were fairly non-committal. In reaction against the ponciness of the Italian Look, Amies produced an overtly masculine line, a bit like an hourglass, with broad shoulders, a narrow waist and a natural line at the hips, and trousers that were slightly tapered without being tight, seventeen inches at the hem. At the same time, he came up with a selection of shortie coats and motoring coats, sweater jackets and sports jackets, all with roughly the same shape.

Overall, this was an improvement on what had gone before, the shapelessness of the fifties. Even so, it wasn't nearly as good as it might have been. Amies still played it safe, stuck mainly to greys and fawns and beiges, and he padded and falsified the natural body-lines. Clearly, he wasn't a radical; just a tinkerer.

Nevertheless, it was action of a sort and the press was enthusiastic, as was the trade in general. Hepworths, delighted, signed Amies up for a massive, though undisclosed, retainer and his name has remained on their labels ever since.

He has not changed much. From year to year he has made minor adjustments, has fussed and fiddled a bit, but he has never tried to lead and, as the decade progressed and other designers began to take more risks, he began to seem half-baked. One longed for him to say Boo; but he never did, not once.

Amies' defence is simply that he's a professional, paid to be discreet, and that Hepworths wouldn't like it if he started to stir things up. 'Do I have a crusading zeal? I wish I could say yes but I can't,' he says. 'I feel that I am a power in the fashion world and, unfortunately, this gives me pleasure. But I don't like to make a fuss, it isn't my way.'

Also, there are doubts as to how much freedom Amies really has, and how much effect on the directions that Hepworths take. In his own version: 'I work a year or eighteen months ahead and make a total statement, suits and shirts and accessories as well. Then we all sit down in committee and see what can be done.'

This is not untrue; it may be slightly simplified, that's all. As far as one can judge, Amies does decide the general direction each year and may also make suggestions for individual garments but it seems unlikely that he sits down at a drawing board and grinds out designs for every suit that carries his name. Most of that is left to his assistants, and the results are then mulled over by Hepworths, who may make revisions, and then again by Amies, who may make further revisions, and so on and so forth, until the final product emerges, totally hybrid. Perhaps that's why it is so often commonplace, drained of all personality or passion.

Over the years, also, it has been noticeable that Hepworths have been giving Amies less fanfare. Until the mid-sixties, they gave him his show at the Savoy every year, each one bigger than the last, until the bill reached £25,000. The press loved it, of course, and played their part most loyally. Each year, the designs would look the same and, each year, the plugs would appear as usual, saluting the Amies New Look.

Eventually, however, Hepworths began to find the price too high and these junkets were discontinued. From then on, Amies' star seemed to be somewhat in decline. Certainly, he has ceased to be undisputed master of English menswear, as he was in the early sixties.

He does not complain. Following on from the tie-up with Hepworths, he has drummed up contracts all over the world. Apart from suits, he does sweaters and shoes, hats and gloves and even pyjamas.

Most profitable of all, he has set up Hardy Amies, USA, which is a division of Genesco and, after a troubled beginning, it has done very well. Altogether, he is consultant to fifteen companies. He has never been successful on the Continent, because they have so many good designers of their own, but everywhere else he thrives: 'We're just one huge Hardy Amies family,' says Michael Bentley, who works for him now, and everybody smiles.

Beyond his financial success, Amies also remains much respected in the trade. Not so much as a designer but

because he was a beginning, because he paved the way for other and more original designers to get similar deals with the multiples.

One such was Pierre Cardin.

Like Amies, he came to menswear from women's fashion. During the fifties, he'd established himself among the top couturiers and towards the end of the decade he began to design for men as well; but his real contribution came after 1960, when he and Robert Bruno, his assistant, produced what they called *le style Anglais.*

This was a romantic version of the traditional English gentleman: the squire. It involved a lot of tweeds and Prince of Wales checks, hacking jackets and deerstalkers, and even Bernard Shaw knickerbockers, and the garments were called things like 'Lord' or 'Sir', or, mystifyingly, 'Perkins'.

What was really interesting, though, was not the fabrics or the inspiration but the cut. At last, there were jackets that followed the lines of the body: long and close-fitting, with natural shoulders, and waisted, and flared at the hips, so that the whole effect was one of movement and flow. No paddings or distortions, no Victorian concealments. Just the natural shape.

This may not now sound sensational. In its original context, though, it was dynamite. Just this one perception, that clothes should not contradict the body beneath them, was enough to change the whole conception of what suits were about, and all the styles of the last decade – single-breasted, double-breasted, safari, Nehru or whatever – have followed the same basic principles.

It is as simple as this: if you are wearing a suit as you read this and it has anything remotely to do with fashion, its label is irrelevant. In essence, you must be wearing the Cardin jacket.

At first, his impact in England was largely indirect. As yet, he had no outlet here and his influence was felt most through London tailors like Eric Joy and Doug Hayward, who echoed his innovations in their own suits. From then on, he has been always the designer most admired by other designers, and

deservedly so, even though he has turned out much trash between his triumphs. At the same time that he was plugging *le style Anglais*, for instance, he also had a great success with a round-necked, collarless jacket, which looked like updated Italiana – short-arsed and cramped – and was no better or worse than Brioni had been.

After a time, it was picked up by London, and bowdlerized, just as Brioni had been, and it went down a storm. For about eighteen months it sold continuously and then, just as it was beginning to fade, it was brought back double-strength by the Beatles, who used it as their stage uniform.

The actual Beatles' suits were made for them by Dougie Millings, a showbiz tailor and inspired doggerel poet of Great Pulteney Street. Still, the basic idea was the same and, when Beatlemania set in, round-necked styles sold by the million, all over the world.

Cardin, of course, made nothing from this, and neither did Dougie Millings, because it's almost impossible, in menswear, to stop your designs being pirated. All that is required is the smallest alteration, just a few variations in detail, and litigation is unfeasible.

Never mind; Cardin had his consolations. Even apart from his couture business, he had begun to lease out his name by franchise, to be used by manufacturers across the world, and his name appeared on ready-made menswear and women's wear, and on radios and TV sets, scents, automobiles, cosmetics and so forth. Anything that was designable, he got a lease on it and, especially in America, his income must have been astronomical.

The snag was, his mass-market designs showed none of the qualities that he'd brought to couture and, again, the same doubt existed as with Amies: how much part did he actually play? Did he really design his ready-mades himself, or merely act as overseer?

Whatever the answer, it didn't slow down his progress and, in 1965, he made a deal with Associated Tailors, a multiple group incorporating John Temple and Neville Reed, with

over four hundred branches (Hepworths had upwards of three hundred).

Clearly, this was done as a counterblast to the Hepworths/Amies set-up, to prove that their competition could take a plunge as well, and the rumour is that it hasn't been much of a success commercially. Naturally, Neville Reed, who have been largely responsible for the Cardin campaign, aren't telling; and, anyway, it isn't relevant. Regardless of whether they've made money or not, the clothes themselves have been negative.

The Strand branch of Neville Reed, for instance, has carried a self-contained Cardin boutique since 1966. But the atmosphere and most of the stock has not been greatly different from the Stevenage Burtons. On close inspection, one can see that the jackets may be a bit longer, a little more shaped. Still, there is no flair, no distinction – the dominant colours are dark grey and dark brown and dark blue, and the ambience is absolutely funereal.

This has all been sad. Originally, both Hepworths and Associated Tailors had no doubt been impelled by the finest of motives, meaning that they wished to sell more clothes and earn more money. In the first objective, they may have met with success; in the second, they drew a blank. After the first spasms of excitement were done with, nothing had changed.

The reason, basically, was no one really wanted it to: both the industry itself and the vast majority of its middle-aged customers were perfectly satisfied with things the way they were. From time to time, feeling vaguely guilty, the menswear trade might try speaking of progress and someone would make a gesture, as Hepworths and Associated Tailors had done. On the High Street, hidden away in corners, there might now be a few new shapes, a scattering of colours. But one had to search for them. When one first walked through the door, the view was still the same: an infinity of grey.

10

Mods

Of all teenage movements, Mod is the best example of the process I spoke of earlier, by which Pop cults rise up out of the undergrowth and spread and escalate into mass-media terms, and are softened up, and then disintegrate.

It had its roots around 1960, when a few teenagers emerged as utter clothes' fanatics, obsessive to a degree that had been unknown before, and that has remained unequalled since.

There were not many of them, just a few dozens scattered around the countryside. They did not run in groups, or stem from any earlier teenage style, and they were not upper-class, as almost all original dressers had been in the past. If they followed any patterns at all, they tended to come from the middle, sons of clerks and small businessmen, and a lot of them were Jewish. They were not rich but they did have enough money and security, enough remoteness from wars and depressions, to dare almost anything.

They were purists. Every penny that they had went straightaway on clothes and each detail was conceived in passion. They spent hours each morning in front of the glass, changed their underwear three times a day. In Newcastle-upon-Tyne, I knew a boy called Thomas Baines, who refused to have sex at parties unless there was a shoe-tree available and a press for his trousers.

Such figures did not become famous, simply because they called themselves by no brand-name that media could catch hold of. They weren't tangible, fell into no easy patterns and, since none of them has made a mark in other spheres and their styles never caught on generally, it is hard to choose an example. That was the point of them, in fact, that they weren't examples but existed, each of them, as individual stylists.

Nevertheless, Bernard Coutts was fairly typical. He was Jewish and middle-class by background and grew up in Southgate. When he was fifteen he left school to become a hairdresser and met a girl called Maria, who lived in Highgate: 'She was fantastic. She was so advanced and her ideas were incredible. She wore maxicoats with a fur collar, and she had dark red lips and dark eyes. She taught me everything and I woke up to clothes.'

Inspired, he went along to the offices of the *Tailor & Cutter*, the trade magazine, and thumbed through their nineteenth-century back-numbers, until he came across a Victorian frock-coat, which he then had made up for himself. It was of dark grey worsted, with a double-breasted waistcoat, high buttons and flared trousers, and he wore it with a turquoise tiepin, a cravat, a stand-up Victorian collar and a gold watch, complete with chain.

At the time, he was making three pounds ten a week and this one suit alone cost £35: 'But I felt like a totally new person. When I put it on, I felt as though I was starting my life all over again.'

He progressed. Soon he was having shirts hand-made in Jermyn Street, white lawn with lace ruffles at the wrist, for ten guineas a time, and he grew his hair long in a fringe, and he haunted jumble sales, picking up tiepins, detachable shirt-collars, anything that he could find. Then he ordered a second suit, in Harris tweed, a green and brown check, made up as a hacking jacket and, when he went out with Maria and they stood together in the tube, everyone else would look amazed and move away.

'I always believed in certain values,' he says. 'Everything that I wore had to be exclusive and I could only wear a shirt once. I couldn't put on a soiled shirt and say "that's good enough", because it wasn't good enough, not for me.

'I bathed as often as I could, twice a day if possible, and I used to wash in cologne, Vent Vert by Carvin. I was never casual. Even in summer, I'd look just as good, in tweeds and waistcoats. No matter what the heat, I'd suffer, because I wanted to be perfect.

'I would have been lost without a mirror. It was my life.' In its single-mindedness, shamelessness and snobbery, this was in the true Brummell tradition, although there was a desire to be stared at, which Brummell would not have approved. But, in essence, Bernard Coutts and his contemporaries were genuine dandies, the first teenage exquisites. Unlike Teds or any other forerunners, they didn't wear uniforms and they didn't use their clothes for aggression, as weapons in a running battle with grown-ups. First and last, their involvement was with themselves – a true dandies' narcissism.

Because they didn't get in the papers or on TV, their influence was only local. But other kids would see them on the street, admire them and spread their message, carrying it and filtering it from neighbourhood to neighbourhood. Gradually the new attitude caught on, the notion of dressing out of self-love rather than rebellion and, by 1962, there were enough converts to make a sect, which was called Mod.

Inevitably, with the emergence of a formalized movement, the original perfectionism became a bit diluted, and most of the individualism disappeared as well. To Bernard Coutts, Mods were downright shoddy – they did not buy each item hand-made, didn't bathe in cologne. 'It wasn't what I was used to,' says Coutts. 'People used to call me Mod but I thought I was more mature. I wanted to improve myself. I couldn't just drift with the crowd.'

However, if Mods fell short of Bernard Coutts' criteria, they went far beyond anybody else's. At first, they were concentrated in a few London suburbs – Stamford Hill, most notably – and they were very young, anything from fourteen upwards. Mark Feld, the infant prodigy, later Marc Bolan, pop singer, currently successful with T-Rex, started at twelve.

'There were about seven guys living in Stamford Hill who were among the first Mods,' he says. 'They were about twenty and most of them were Jewish and none of them worked. They just ponced about and lived off their parents. All they cared about was their clothes and they had new things all the time.

'I thought they were fantastic and I used to go home and literally pray to become a Mod. I really did that. Then I started and gradually I came to have about six suits. Suddenly people started to look at me and come up to me and then I was accepted as a Mod.

'At this time, clothes were all that Mod was about. The music and dancing and scooters and pills came later. I'd say that Mod was mentally a very homosexual thing, though not in any physical sense. I was too hung up on myself to be interested in anyone else and, besides, I was still very young.

'I didn't think at all. The only thought I ever had was "Oh, I just bought one suit this week and I should have bought three". That was all. I was completely knocked out by my own image, by the idea of Mark Feld.'

As for the actual clothes, they changed with each neighbourhood, so that it wasn't yet possible to talk about an over-all Mod Look. Many of the jackets were updatings of the Italian style, short and boxy, and there were very tiny, elfin shoes, and Levis were more prestigious than ever. But there weren't any rules. In 1962, Mark Feld appeared in *Town* magazine, wearing a long and beautifully cut jacket, and a black leather waistcoat, a pocket handkerchief, a round-collared shirt. The effect was immaculate but unclassifiable.

Such ornateness was only possible because teenagers, during the early sixties, were in a position of unparalleled affluence. Mods could not remember the war, nor, except as a shadow, the austerity, and they were not threatened by any real poverty. When they worked, they were wealthy; even when they didn't, they collected unemployment benefit, and this cushioning produced in them smugness, a sense of power and, yes, decadence.

I do not mean that poverty disappeared. Where it survived, however, where teenagers were trapped in slums and scuffled to survive, they did not become Mods. They were ton-up boys or just plain hooligans; but Mod was a product of safety.

From the suburbs, it spread all over London, and established a new mecca in Shepherds Bush, and then swept on to the south coast, and up as far as Nottingham, although it

never amounted to much above the Trent; and, as it expanded, so its style diversified. Instead of existing purely for clothes, Mods became involved in music and possessions. The Rolling Stones emerged from Richmond and became the first Mod group (they were not Mods themselves but Mods adopted them and supported them) and, when they moved on to a national scale, they were replaced by the Yardbirds; *Ready, Steady, Go* was basically a Mod TV show; Carnaby Street, very briefly, was also Mod.

This was the Shepherds Bush era and, just as Bernard Coutts had disapproved of the first Mods, so Mark Feld now disapproved in turn. 'It began to get out of hand,' he says. 'The Mods were uncool and I wouldn't speak to them. I took it all incredibly seriously and they seemed like a travesty.'

It is true that the Shepherds Bush Mod was made of coarser stuff. Instead of creating his own look, he began to huddle in packs and he was louder, less fastidious, more physical; but scarcely less involved.

He was usually very small and solemn-looking, and about seventeen years old. He rode on a scooter and travelled in a gaggle. In every district, there would be a top Mod and, depending on how he dressed himself, that's how the whole district would dress.

In this way, Mod style varied around the country; but there were certain basic looks: little mohair suits with narrow trousers, which were pressed every day and carried around in a bowling bag, to be put on fresh before entering a party or dance hall; Ivy League jackets, in white-and-blue-striped cotton or seersucker, with long side vents; maroon or mustard-coloured suede shoes, or desert boots; army surplus anoraks, known as Parkers, with bits of fox-fur sewn around the collar; knitted ties; short-legged, ankle-swinger trousers; and clip-on braces, worn beneath a jacket.

With the exception of the Parkers, which were only meant for scooter-wear, all of this was aimed at neatness and precision, because Mods were not flamboyants. They had short hair and avoided fancy dress – when Carnaby Street went riotous

and tried to trap tourists with jokes, they abandoned it fast. In their tastes, they were puritan.

They were curiously self-contained. They tended not to be interested in girls, nor in anyone else. In clubs, they danced by themselves, lost in narcissistic dreams and, wherever there was a mirror, they formed queues. Often, they would wear make-up – eye-liner and mascara – but that didn't mean they were queer, or not necessarily; it was just a symbol of strangeness.

Their girls, meanwhile, camp followers, wore long fake-leather coats, suede shoes and had cropped hair and, traipsing around the boys, were ignored. They looked extremely miserable.

At weekends, the Mods came up into the West End and stayed awake for thirty-six hours. They hung around in clubs, in coffee bars and on Soho street corners and when they got tired they took pills to keep going, great handfuls of Purple Hearts. Apart from that, they did nothing. They seemed sexless and emotionless, passive in everything. They were not happy and not unhappy and, to the outsider, they were scary: a race of undead.

The high point of Mod undoubtedly came with the emergence of The Who, halfway through 1964, when they began to play Tuesday nights at the Marquee Club. They came from Shepherds Bush and were Mod, or semi-Mod themselves. They were clothes-obsessives, with Union Jack jackets and Pop Art T-shirts, and a totally new outfit each for every performance, and Pete Townshend alone, their lead guitarist and songwriter, used to spend upwards of £100 a week on his clothes. He also wrote a song called *My Generation*, which became the Mod anthem:

> People try to put us down,
> Just because we get around . . .
> Things they do look awful cold –
> Hope I die before I get old.

By this time, Mod had been discovered by media and, from here on, the movement began to go backwards. Up till now,

Mods had been something quite specific, a distinct style and approach; but now the press and TV began to use the word indiscriminately. Because Mods had once shopped in Carnaby Street, the whole Carnaby Street ballyhoo was now called Mod. After that, it was only a matter of time before anything young, anything remotely new or fashionable, was pigeon-holed Mod and, therefore, made instantly comprehensible to the general public. The Beatles were Mod; Mary Quant was Mod, and so were Mario & Franco's restaurants, and David Bailey; Anthony Armstrong-Jones was very Mod indeed. In the hands of admen, it became an all-purpose instant adjective, like Fab or Gear, to be used for pop groups or cornflakes or dog biscuits alike. By 1965, it had lost all meaning.

Pressured and confused by all this, thousands and tens of thousands of teenagers decided to be Mod, without ever knowing what it implied. They were just ordinary kids, a bit restless and a bit loutish, a bit bored and hot for novelty; dandyism and exquisiteness meant nothing to them whatever. 'False Mods,' says Chris Covill, a top Mod of the Shepherds Bush age. 'Just nowhere kids who weren't dedicated. They wanted to be cool but there was violence in them and they couldn't change.'

They had none of that generic Mod self-absorption. They didn't carry their suits in bowling bags, or preen, or sit for hours in front of mirrors. Instead, they hung out in dance halls and got into fights and had sex, and they screamed into Carnaby Street, buying everything that was gaudy and cheap, while the original Mods looked on in disgust.

In reaction against Mod, meanwhile, a counter-movement had sprung up: the Rockers.

These were ton-up boys by another name and, before Mod had come along, they had been flagging. In London, ton-up boys had declined into near-extinction and, even in the provinces, they survived only in patches, last-ditch guerrillas on motorbikes, mooching about in transport caffs.

When Mod caught on, however, there were many teenagers who refused to go along with it. Especially in the north, and

in rural districts, they found it soft and creepy, and they went to the opposite extreme, butched themselves up in drainpipes and winklepickers. From the ashes of Ton-up, there rose like a phoenix the Rocker.

Most Rockers, it has to be said, were short on vocation. They were involved as a reaction against Mod, rather than out of any inner compulsion, and when Mod went kaput, so did they.

Even so, for the moment, they stuck to the rules and greased their hair, wore black leather jackets with studding and tigers embossed on the back, worshipped Jerry Lee Lewis, and battle was joined: false Mod against false Rocker.

Through 1964 and 1965, at bank holidays, they converged on towns along the south coast and clashed head-on. For forty-eight hours, there would be continuous mayhem. Then everyone turned round and went home again. While it lasted, it felt exciting, and media loved it, and it provided tailor-made material for leader writers, politicals and preachers, so that everyone was satisfied. Like the Isle of Wight pop festivals, five years later, they were perfect hype occasions – twentieth-century pantomimes, with fun for all the family.

But after the sixth or seventh successive holocaust, all roughly identical, the craze began to lose its magic. Media were losing interest, and so were the participants, particularly the Mods. The riots themselves were all right but the bits in between, all the cruising about on scooters and popping pills and the word Mod itself, seemed used up.

New styles were coming in. Marijuana was offered instead of pills, long hair instead of short, revolt instead of passivity. The ground was being cleared for Hippie and, by 1966, Mod was virtually done for. From Stamford Hill to the last seaside scufflings, it had lasted less than five years, and Mark Feld was now eighteen. 'Sometimes I looked back,' he says. 'It made me feel very tired.'*

* My quotes from Mark Feld and Chris Covill in this chapter are taken from an article I wrote for the *Observer* colour magazine in 1967.

II

Hair

Throughout the first half of this century long hair meant homosexuality. There were exceptions, mostly in Soho, but not very many. 'If your ears didn't show, you were effeminate,' says Bunny Roger. 'It was simple, really.'

During the late fifties, however, the Beats began and they were different. They grew their hair and their beards, not as a sexual come-on but in protest against what they saw as the conformity and mediocrity of the Establishment and, in this, they harked back to movements of the nineteenth century, to Walt Whitman, and to the French bohemians and, above all, to the Russian nihilists of the 1860s, who had combined a search for new values and moralities with the cultivation of shoulder-length hair, trampish clothes and filthy finger-nails.

Quite simply, the Beats wished to cut themselves off from the mainstream, by making themselves offensive, and long hair achieved this at once. It went against everything post-Victorian society most valued – neatness, hygiene, restraint; it rejected the ideas of self-concealment and ordered behaviour; it was consciously barbaric.

As I have written earlier, English Beats themselves were always poor imitations of American originals and remained somewhat comic; but, in a watered-down form, their attitudes and looks were taken up by art students, and it was through the art schools that long hair first caught on generally.

Towards the end of the decade, students became more and more anarchic, both in their hair and clothes, and in their general viewpoints. Some of this revolt, inevitably, was skin-deep and ephemeral, like the Acker Bilk ravers in their bowler hats and agricultural boots; some was serious and lasted.

It was the Beatles who first took this up and introduced it to the general public, albeit in diluted form.

In Liverpool, John Lennon and Stuart Sutcliffe (the rhythm guitarist, who later died in Hamburg) went together to art school and the whole group hung around in the semi-Beat pubs, the arty undergrowth, and came across the Canning Street mob, led by the poet/painter/guru/glutton Adrian Henri, who was the best English approximation to Allen Ginsberg. When they began, as the Quarrymen, they had been yobboes, in black leather jackets and drainpipes; but now, by the early sixties, they became a bit deep and grew their hair long.

When Brian Epstein discovered them, he tidied them up considerably. He put them into uniforms and made their hairstyles identical, so that they were cute instead of menacing, and he taught them to smile a lot. Even so, the whiff of art school remained upon them, in their humour and disrespect, and no pumice could scrape it off.

When you look back at early Beatle photographs now, they look very tame indeed, and the hair quite short; at the time they were startling, because the norm had become near-baldness. Presley's quiff and sideboards, the duck's arse, had disappeared with the Teds and, since then, the short back and sides had been left in sole control. If you wished to be daring, your only choices were the razor cut, of Italian derivation, which left you looking fuzzy; and the Billy Fury, in which you left a single lock loose at the front, so that it fell down over your brow.

Coming after this, the Beatles seemed very wild. They had a directness to them that no pop groups had had before, a lack of bullshit, and their hair was part of this. But, more important, they were path-clearers: the Beatle-cut only went halfway, but, afterwards, the way was left open for others, like the Rolling Stones.

The Stones were directly in the Beat/art-school tradition but went even further. On top of absolute contempt for straight society, they made efforts to be as nasty, as violent and obscene and pre-Neanderthal as possible, and they set a stance in dissent that has prevailed ever since: *'Be extreme. Be anything on earth, be ugly or scabrous or idiotic but do not*

be lukewarm.' As they wrote on one of their album sleeves, This record should be played LOUD.

They abolished all rules. Before them, all pop groups, and all large teenage movements, had worn uniforms. The Stones finished that – on stage, once they'd become established, they dressed at random, appearing in anything that attracted them. Sometimes it would be a camp extravagance; sometimes expensive; sometimes just jeans and a T-shirt.

What they were saying was *we can do what we like, there are no laws left to be obeyed, nothing applies* and in this they were the final destroyers of the Gentleman, and of all concepts of dress that had been formulated since Beau Brummell.

The prime mover in all this was Andrew Loog Oldham, their manager, who lived only for outrage. In high-heeled boots, trousers, puff-sleeved pink shirts and tinted glasses, jewellery and make-up, he was the campest and most vicious and most exhibitionist figure imaginable, and the Stones followed on from him.

Among the Rolling Stones themselves, the most imaginative dressers were Mick Jagger and Brian Jones. In fact, Jones had been celebrated for his clothes even before the Stones had broken through as a group. As they developed, however, it was Jagger who attracted most attention and he came gradually to stand as the definitive clothes-horse of the decade. Not necessarily the best, certainly not by any traditional standards, nor the most innovative, nor the most inspired; but the most archetypal, the one who best expressed the time.

It would be meaningless to set out a list of his clothes. There have been too many and, in any case, it would miss his point, which has been to throw together an infinite number of styles, fabrics and atmospheres and never to slow down long enough to be labelled, never to make it possible to say 'Yes, that is the Jagger Look.'

He was not a dandy. In fact, he was the opposite – the tenets on which dandyism was founded – formality and subtlety and perfectionism – were precisely what he was assaulting. He was careless, he was blatant. He often used

deliberate bad taste, either kitsch or pornographic, and he clashed silks with denims, velvets with satins, colours thrown together in orgies. For the Hyde Park concert, just after Brian Jones had died, he wore a white minidress.

At his best, which was often, he looked splendid; at his worst, which was equally often, he was disastrous. But his successes or failures were irrelevant: he thought that clothes were fun but their theory and strictures tedious beyond belief and, if he flopped, so what? He risked everything on impact and wore his clothes like slogans, sexual or comic or surreal, romantic or sadistic. Many times he got away with absurdities, just because of his confidence, his in-built style.

But in the beginning, it wasn't the Stones' clothes that mattered; it was their hair, and the murder in their faces, peeping out through the jungle. Unlike the Beatles, this was what the Beats had meant – hair used as a kick in the teeth, as insult and ridicule heaped on every drabness of the system; hair as symbolic of sex, of energy; hair almost as religion.

When schoolboys and middle-aged men had grown Beatle fringes or bought Beatle wigs, they hadn't known what it meant. They had thought it was a game, a short-term novelty, to be discarded when you were bored or some new toy replaced it. But when one grew one's hair long like the Stones, there was no such mistake. It was done as a banner, a battle-sign, and first it spread to other pop groups, the ex-art school, rhythm 'n blues bands like the Kinks and the Pretty Things; and then to their followers; and then to the lump of modish, discontented young.

The drawback to long hair, or one of them, was that nobody knew how to cut it. Before the war, when gentlemen had still been gentlemen, the top of the trade had been Trumpers of Curzon Street and, even now, they cut hair better than anyone. But hirsutery hardly intrigued them – they had a clientele of clubmen, clerics and country gentry and were satisfied.

There was also a more sixties stylist, Robert James in Leicester Square, who catered for most of the pop groups and their hangers-on. However, he was the exception and basically, if you grew your hair long, you had just two choices:

to let it spread out in a wilderness, completely out of control, or to get it cut by your girlfriend. Either way, the effects were erratic.

So it was that long hair came to be ugly. In theory, it might be magnificent wildness, hair like flame; in practice, it was mostly just a mess.

Such scruffiness, however, was not unsatisfactory. If anything, it strengthened the gesture, made the protest seem more real. Just as the Beats had made a cult of sordidity – unswept basements, dirty sheets and dirty washing, the smells of stale sex and cat piss – so the new Hip did now. In the time-honoured bohemian mode, they wallowed in picturesque squalor.

To get this into perspective, one must first understand that long hair was overwhelmingly a middle-class style of revolt. It was centred, as always, on the art schools and also flourished among undergraduates and the arty unemployed; it was really very safe.

The mass of working-class teenagers, meanwhile, took no notice: the sickness of society did not intrigue them. For them, the sixties were a time of more money and more freedom, almost a golden age. Like teenagers always, they had their moments of explosion but, as with the Teds, it came from their guts and their fists. They tore apart football trains, staged riots at bank holidays and left it at that. More radical dissent seemed boring and, on the whole, their hair stayed short.

But for the young bourgeoisie, it was very different. To them, the national affluence was not a bonus but a curse, because it robbed them of risk. No matter how hard they tried, nor how fiercely they spoke of rejecting society, they were secure.

This was intolerable, and long hair offered a form of escape. It gave at least an illusion of barbarity, of danger and no-compromise. To be jeered at in the streets, sent home by headmasters, turned away from restaurants, even beaten up – this was a longed-for persecution: 'Every time I'm insulted, I get a glow,' said Andrew Oldham. 'It's very real, isn't it?'

12

Dandies

In 1959, about the time that the Mark Sykes circle was breaking up, Christopher Gibbs opened an antique shop in Camden Passage and his assistant was Jane Ormsby-Gore, the daughter of Lord Harlech. They became close friends and began to buy clothes together.

In particular, they bought old clothes – Victorian Melton overcoats, eighteenth-century waistcoats or ties from Persian brocade. They used to descend on the Portobello Road market, which hadn't yet become a tourist trap, and pick up anything they could find, old belts and buckles, or chintzes to be made into linings.

Following Suna Portman's example, Christopher Gibbs had gone to Morocco and brought back Arabic robes and slippers, and quantities of hashish. He sat at home, propped up on his Marrakesh cushions and surrounded by his friends, and this was among the first English attempts at what later became the Hippie lifestyle.

By now, a new generation of upper-class disreputables had taken shape, as replacements for the Sykes mob. Most of them had been friends of Jane Ormsby-Gore and they now met Gibbs and a definite circle was formed, both aristocratic and bohemian: Michael Rainey, Mark Palmer, Tara Browne, Nicholas Gormaston, David Mlinaric and a few others.

In many respects, they were much the same as Sykes and Simon Hodgson. They had the same clannishness, the same flair, the same disrespect for their own backgrounds and, like their predecessors, they were influenced mostly from below, by pop groups and movie stars.

The difference was that the new group wasn't much concerned with outrage. Sykes and his followers had been

pioneers, battling against the austerity; now the point had been made, revolt had turned into habit, and extremes were no longer necessary. Thus, there was no fancy dress and no drag, no genuflection before vicars at Sloane Square station. Instead, there was dandyism.

Baudelaire, writing in 1836, produced a blueprint: 'Dandyism appears especially in the transitory periods when democracy is not yet all-powerful, and when aristocracy is only partially unsettled and depreciated. In the confusion of such periods, some few men who are out of their sphere, disgusted and unoccupied, but are all rich in natural force, may conceive the project of founding a new kind of aristocracy ... Dandyism is the last splendour of heroism in decadence.'

So it was, more or less, in the early sixties. Public schoolboys, arriving in London, were no longer faced by clearcut alternatives – politics, the army, the city. They were no longer born to govern, had no inbred function. On the other hand, they had not yet been assimilated into the mainstream. For the moment, they fitted nowhere.

Stranded, the brighter and more unconventional ones looked around for diversions. Where once they would have been busy building empires, now they gambled and smoked hash, and immersed themselves in Pop. From time to time, they would acquire new toys, like a boutique or an antique shop or a photographer's studio, to give the illusion of purpose.

That was the secret, to keep always on the move, so that tedium and the sense of futility could never catch up. There were nightclubs and journeys, constant treats, novelties of every kind. Above all, there were clothes.

In this, Christopher Gibbs provided a base. He wasn't dominant emotionally, not being a guru by temperament, but he was a bit older than the others, a bit wiser and better dressed than anyone, except perhaps for Michael Rainey: 'Christopher Gibbs,' says Eric Joy, exaggerating only slightly, 'is the most avant-garde dresser that this country has ever had. He had more effect on fashion in the sixties than half the designers put together.'

In 1961, he was wearing flared trousers, probably the first Englishman to do so, and waistcoats with frogging from Beirut and, during one brief phase filled with pink champagne, apricot silk pyjamas. Through it all, however, there ran a certain amount of humour and Gibbs was less fanatic than others in his set. Mark Palmer, for instance, an old Etonian who had served three years in the hulks, as pageboy to HM The Queen, would ring up Gibbs and talk for forty minutes about what tie he was going to wear.

As with the middle-class dressers of the same period, like Bernard Coutts, this was not quite dandyism as laid down by Beau Brummell, because it begged for attention. Still, forty minutes spent on a tie – even Brummell could not have called it sloppiness.

Nor was the obsession with clothes confined to Gibbs and a handful of his friends. In a milder form, it was manifesting itself among young aristos all over the country and, by 1962, the movement had grown large enough to support its own tailor – Blades, of Dover Street (see pp. 98–100).

This was not a phenomenon to be confused with Carnaby Street, or with Mod. To a large extent, it sprang from the same sources – ignorance of the war and its aftermath, increased leisure time, a sense of safety, the rise of Pop – but it had a very different atmosphere. Although they may have rejected pre-war moral values and lifestyles, they remained traditionalist in that they cared very much about quality, and style. They were Pop, certainly; but they weren't popular, meaning common, and they had nothing but scorn for Carnaby Street in its tattiness. 'Trash,' says David Mlinaric. 'Always was, and it still is.'

In theory, the dandies were both liberal and liberated. They bought Beatle records and spoke of their Generation, as though the young formed a single brotherhood. But in practice, the generation they meant lived entirely in Chelsea and Kensington, and was rich and civilized. They did not count the spotted millions, swarming about in dance halls, factories and football grounds. 'Everyone now goes round

loving each other,' Mark Palmer said but, by everyone, he meant only himself and his friends.

They were, in fact, an élite. But it was not an élitism based on breeding or manners, as it would have been in the thirties, and they were no longer Gentlemen, despite their background. If they were anything in particular, they were Stars, and they made their valuations by Hollywood criteria: good looks, charm, sexuality, success.

This then was Baudelaire's new aristocracy, and the inheritors, like Palmer and Michael Rainey, were only half of it. The other, more famous and more powerful half were newcomers, heroes of the media.

Just as Beau Brummell, whose father had been secretary to Lord North, had started out a nonentity and finished up more influential than even the Prince of Wales, so the real leaders now were pop stars – the Beatles, above all, and Mick Jagger – and the aristocrats by birth became peripheral, often outright sycophantic.

The centre of the circuit was the Adlib, a discotheque just back off Leicester Square and, throughout 1964 and 1965, it was a nightly carnival, where the Beatles held court, and the Pop Establishment surrounded them – rock groups and their managers, models and their photographers, groupies, notetakers and dealers, and the dandies as well – and everyone stared at everyone else, and at their own reflections.

For over a year, the regulars virtually lived there and, for every visit, they would prepare themselves with as much anguish as a schoolgirl on her first date. 'One spent a lot of time preening and had a good few tries before one was satisfied. One was very narcissistic indeed. If anyone else wore the same outfit, one was furious,' says David Mlinaric. 'Or pretty cross, at least.'

There was also a great deal of paint. Christopher Gibbs, for example, used to lard himself with cosmetics, even more so than a Mod – Floris and Guerlain colognes, Man Tan and Kohl. But at the Adlib, as with the Mods, such stuff didn't mean you were queer, not by definition. You might or might not be and, in any case, nobody thought that it mattered.

Whatever stunts you pulled, they were seen only as gambits, one more stroke by which passers-by might be made to gasp and start back afrighted.

Objectively, the Adlib may be hard to justify, in its self-love and exclusiveness and indulgence, and soon enough, it was soured. But for the moment, just as with Carnaby Street, distaste was swept aside by the sheer euphoria of the instant, the sense of unleashing.

Everything was new. Pop and drugs and clothes, discotheques and trattorias – with every month and every week, there would be some fresh treat. 'One had waited so long,' says Christopher Gibbs. 'All one's life, it seemed, and now it was actually happening. Suddenly, everyone seemed to be dressing up and rushing around; having fun, at last.'

If it was indulgent, therefore, at least it was impelled by pleasure. 'It wasn't boring,' says Mlinaric. 'It was all a great joke, it was shameless. It was marvellous just to show off and be stared at. One enjoyed amazing people.'

Somewhere in 1966, the idyll began to go flat and, as always, media were largely responsible. As soon as the press took notice, tedium set in. It was no longer enough just to go to the Adlib and parade and get drunk; of an instant, it all became a matter for analysis and TV documentary. 'Permissiveness' was mentioned, and the 'Changing Face of Society' and 'Mad Mod London'. Interviews were given, attitudes examined. Disastrous questions were asked. 'People would ask me why I dressed up and I'd say for fun, and they'd say "why is it fun"?' Mlinaric says. 'And after a time, you know, it *wasn't* fun; it had stopped.

'It started to be everywhere. There was no privacy left, it all became self-conscious and boring. I began to hate the newspapers.'

Peacocks and Dandy Renaissances were written up at length, and the whole concept got muddled. In the beginning, Mlinaric and the others *had* been dandies; but now confusion entered. Just as there'd been with the Edwardian Look, ten years earlier, there was much bullshit about the return of elegance, the new age of chivalry and, misunderstanding the

point, people began to ape the actual styles of Regency, dolling up in velvet frockcoats and frilled shirts and cravats.

This was foolishness, of course, as absurd as if Brummell himself, having read of Sir Philip Sidney and admired him, had got himself up in doublet and hose. It was fancy dress and, as such, an anti-dandyism – exactly the kind of overstatement that Brummell most despised.

Nevertheless, it proved a great success, both with the press – and with the American press especially – and with Carnaby Street, who churned it out as drag for £15 a time, calling it the Regency Look: 'Buttons and Beaux,' said the trade magazines.

Of all the new fops, the most publicized was Lord Patrick Lichfield, the fashion photographer, a well-meaning and enthusiastic man but not necessarily a paragon of taste, who so drenched himself in frills and furbelows as to look, as an acquaintance remarked, 'like a silent-film Scarlet Pimpernel'.

Despite this, or perhaps because of it, he swept all before him. He monopolized the gossip columns, appeared at premiers and was profiled by American magazines. He made his gamekeepers wear bottle-green corduroy breeches and was, for one season at least, the number one social darling of New York. Finally, he was voted among the world's ten best-dressed men.

He was not alone; there were many others like him, with the same pantomime approach, and it was their sum total that was damaging.

'It all began to burn itself out,' says Mlinaric. 'It took so much time and care and, in the end, it was tedious to be always polishing one's shoes and sitting down without creasing one's trousers. Gradually, one just stopped.'

That, more or less, was the end of dandyism in the sixties. Its collapse had been inevitable – it was a vocation from another time and speed of life – and, like all games, it depended greatly on novelty.

While it lasted, though, it had been quite enthralling. 'Aaahh, the mirror,' says Christopher Gibbs. 'Miss Whiplash, I love you.'

13
At Last, Male Fashion

Although they didn't develop or last, the dandies were important. They didn't lead to any general revival in dandyism, it's true, but they did produce a flowering in male fashion as a whole.

Dandyism and fashion are two quite different things. The first implies a certain continuity, by which you arrive at a personal style and, within limits, stick to it; the second is for dilettantes, to be pursued at all costs, regardless of taste or suitability. What they both have in common, though, is an obsession with appearances, and it is this that the dandies brought back into the lives of rich Englishmen.

Before they started, at the beginning of the sixties, there was no such thing as male high fashion. As I have already said, modishness was slowly gathering weight further down the market, first through Cecil Gee and then John Michael, and was soon to catch fire with Carnaby Street. But the upper-class market was still confined to Savile Row, who made suits to last for a decade and, therefore, were anti-fashion.

The dandies changed this. By caring and by making innovations in their own clothes, they made it possible for a new breed of tailor to emerge, using a more fashion-conscious approach. Then the circus struck up at the Adlib, and, via the dandies, the passion for dress began to permeate throughout the Pop aristocracy. By the mid-sixties, there was a definite fashionable world, constantly expanding.

From here on, in its attitudes, male fashion became virtually indistinguishable from female fashion. There was the same concern with In and Out, the same yearly or twice-yearly shift in direction, the same agonies of doubt, the same ceaseless one-upmanship.

This was *Time* magazine's Swinging London – a period of great flamboyance and smugness and decadence, during which nothing seemed to exist beyond sitting in Italian restaurants and buying clothes and getting stoned, listening to the Beatles and going on long holidays.

Thus, high fashion began to appear in every field of menswear – tailoring, shirt-making, hats, shoes, etc – and, between them, they formed a small industry, like couture.

The founding-father was Blades, which started in 1962 and was run by three partners; Rupert Lycett Green, ex-Etonian, twenty-two-years old, who wanted to be a designer; Eric Joy, a cutter from Clerkenwell, famous for his lip; and Charlie Hornby, who handled the finances for a time and then got bored and went into the City instead.

Primarily, they were tailors but they did some ready-mades as well and, between them, they produced the first post-Cardin suit in England. It was an adaptation, rather than a copy, but there were the same long and lean jackets, high-waisted and with great concentration of detail, like deep vents and wide lapels. It came in colours like bottle green and cream, or with broad chalk-stripes, and cost about £60, which was on a level with Savile Row. Altogether, it seemed most dashing.

From the beginning, Rupert Lycett Green showed talents for self-publicity. After all, an Etonian shopkeeper – even in the sixties, this carried cheap thrills. It wasn't the first time that the upper class had put money into tailoring, but it was the first time that they'd gone out themselves and hustled for custom. And then Lycett Green himself was copy. Very tall and very skinny, he was married to John Betjeman's daughter and was charming, quick with a quote and well equipped with enemies. All in all, he was a columnist's dream, and not above cashing in.

Blades' other asset, a more concrete one, was Eric Joy, who really knew how to cut. Before this, if you'd wanted to dress adventurously, you had travelled to Carnaby Street and suffered agonies of bad fit and tightness. Now Joy would make you look just as wild and you'd be comfortable as well.

The real success of Blades, however, was probably based less on its genuine qualities than on its snob appeal. Commercially, its greatest strength lay in its ambivalence, the way that it fitted two worlds at once. On the one hand, its clothes were new and riotous; on the other, it had a Georgian frontage in Dover Street, an atmosphere more like a club than a shop and a generous smattering of peerage in its clientele.

It was both Pop and Gentleman Amateur at once – pink shirts in the parlour and backgammon in the fitting room. Whatever your aspirations, social or fashionable or aesthetic, Blades had you covered, and it caught the full range of the Adlib aristocracy.

Despite this, it didn't make money. It got in all the glossies and was packed out with superstars but Charlie Hornby had left and Lycett Green didn't yet understand business. Finally, he had to make changes: 'In 1965, I asked myself, *am I going to start doing this properly or should I get out?* and I decided to carry on. So I moved to Savile Row and became a professional.'

This was largely a symbolic move. By facing the older tailors on their own ground he was setting himself up explicitly as an alternative, a new Establishment, and most of the high-fashion designers have followed him since, so that now the streets around Savile Row are divided almost equally, split halfway between the old and new.

The following year Eric Joy departed, not without bitterness, first to work for Michael Fish and then to set up on his own, in a basement in Cork Street, where he thrived and still cuts suits as well as anyone.

From then on, Lycett Green put increasing emphasis on himself as a designer and less on Blades as a workaday tailors. The shop has been filled with coats and shirts and accessories, as well as suits and, instead of just a shopkeeper, Lycett Green has been a creative artist, yet.

The results have been mixed. From time to time, there have been bonuses but there have been mistakes as well and, after Hippie set in, a period of utter disaster. Not wishing to be left behind, Lycett Green began feverishly to turn out fancy dress

– kaftans and fringes and Nehru suits, the full psychedelic production.

Financially it worked. The press still loved him and his turnover rose to £200,000 a year. But clownishness was not truly his style, and he found himself continually outgimmicked and out-outraged by Mr Fish, just around the corner. In the end, he gave it up and reverted to what he did best, well-cut and unfussed suits, knocked down for £100 a time.

His reputation varies. One view puts him very high indeed, possibly the best designer in England; another dismisses him altogether, giving all the credit to Joy and to the ideas of customers like Christopher Gibbs and Michael Rainey.

For myself, I'd put him about halfway: a good shopkeeper and clever self-publicist, but with undue pretensions. What is certain, however, is that Blades itself has mattered. It pioneered suits that actually fitted and, for its first three or four years, it was clearly the best men's shop in London.

During this period, its only rival was Doug Hayward, an East Ender who had worked for Dimi Major, a first-class tailor in Fulham, and then started on his own in 1963. He was twenty-eight at the time and very ambitious. He had none of Lycett Green's social cachet, of course, but he was more professional and infinitely painstaking, willing to go to his clients' homes for fittings, and to alter and re-alter endlessly. He was amiable, patient and worked his arse off.

Quite quickly he began to build up a following, not so much among dandies, but in showbiz circles, especially among figures like Terence Stamp and Tommy Steele and Michael Caine – East Enders who had made it and saw him as a compatriot, in need of assistance.

From there his reputation spread to older theatricals, like Noel Coward and John Gielgud, and to the better-dressed pop stars, like Paul McCartney. Soon he had opened a shop in Mayfair and was growing fat, and he's never faltered since. In the style of Stamp or Mick Jagger, or Eric Joy, he has gone down a storm with the trendy aristocracy, because he is tough and disrespectful and has an accent. He has become something of a mascot, in fact, and by the late sixties he had opened

a club called Burkes, in partnership with Patrick Lichfield, which was packed out with modishness of every derivation. Each lunchtime, Hayward would sit there in state and be greatly admired, and only slightly patronized, for his caddishness.

He was also a very fair tailor, and bright and funny and quite unpompous: 'I must have the scruffiest lot of customers in town, paying more to look scruffy than anyone else. I am not interested in fashion, and I'm not interested in designers, or poncy little drawings, or what's in or out. I have no particular look. I am a tailor and I make suits that fit.'

Savile Row, at first, was unimpressed, both by Hayward and by Rupert Lycett Green. For five years, the established firms sat back smug and waited for the upstarts to collapse, and for Carnaby Street to come to nothing, and for everything to return to pre-war sanity. By the time they saw it wasn't going to happen like that, most of their younger customers had left them.

It was too late then. Perhaps half of their clientele was gone beyond retrieving and the remnants weren't enough to survive on. One after another, the small companies went bust and, as costs rose and the supply of apprentices got less, even the largest firms were pushed. By 1970, if it hadn't been for the American tourist trade, Savile Row would have been a wreck.

Other branches of élitist menswear proved less stubborn. The Jermyn Street shirtmakers, for instance, saw how things were going quite quickly and began to use more colour and a more fitted shape. In 1962, Turnbull & Asser, perhaps the most august of all, had refused to make David Mlinaric a cream-coloured shirt in slubbed silk, on the grounds that 'It can't be done'; three years later, they had repainted their frontage like a gypsy caravan and allowed Michael Fish, one of their salesmen, to flame into orgies of silks and voiles and satins, ruffles and frills.

This was the first time that an established and sober-sided, pre-war firm had thrown its weight fully behind the changing order and they didn't compromise. From being a symbol of

measure, a Turnbull & Asser shirt turned suddenly into fantasy: flowered patterns, prints like posters, colours flaring and clashing and overflowing wildly.

Within the trade the transformation caused much stir; but outside it wasn't greatly noticed because, by this time, innovations were coming from all sides at once, faster than one could keep track of. At last there was a real impetus, a snowballing, and a kind of fever: 'Everyone was going wild,' says Charles Schuller at Just Men. 'So I thought, why not me?'

In the space of a year or so, covering 1964 and 1965, there were the first well-cut flared trousers, off-the-peg, at Just Men; the first high boots, at the Chelsea Cobbler; the first kipper ties, cut wide and expansively patterned, again made by Michael Fish at Turnbull & Asser; the first tapered ready-made shirts, and the first fashion-conscious caps, notably the student cap, and the first longer overcoats, and so on and so forth endlessly.

Two updatings, in particular, were very badly needed: shoes and spectacles.

English shoes, for a very long time, had meant black or brown calf lace-ups of, as Evelyn Waugh puts it, a footlike description, and had been both ugly and monotonous. Occasionally, the teenage market had produced an alternative, like the creeper or the winklepicker, and since the war, there had been an increasing market for elastic-sided slip-ons; but, essentially, shoe design was as bogged down as tailoring, and the sense of fashion non-existent.

Abroad, it was different. In England men thought of shoes as accessories, something drab beneath the ankle; but in France, and especially in Italy, they were given the same emphasis as suits or shirts, and flourished in all kinds of shapes, tones and leathers.

During the mid-sixties this range increased still further. Impelled by Carnaby Street and the worldwide menswear boom that it created, European designers caught breath and set out to put male footwear on a par with women's shoes, in variety, imagination and speed of change.

Since shoes, unlike tailoring, are international, and the lead-

ing continental firms all have outlets in Britain, the effects of this were felt here straightaway. First Gucci, and then Bally and Ravel, flooded the market with new styles; English firms, like Toppers and Elliotts, joined in; and, by 1966, shop windows were filled with every shape and gimmick imaginable: round-toed and wedge-toed, squat-heeled or high, patent leather or kid or snakeskin, buckled or linked.

Not all of this worked. Perhaps because most of the designers also worked for women, there was a general preciousness. Round-toed and glacéd, silver-buckled styles might be well enough in windows but, worn by flat-footed, hairy-legged Englishmen, they usually looked over-dainty – Arthur Mullard dressed as Little Lord Fauntleroy.

Boots were better. Being butch by their nature, they had become the staple Pop footwear with Chelsea boots and the Beatles, and they remained so throughout the sixties, especially after the Chelsea Cobbler had given them variety.

The Cobbler started in 1965, selling wholesale to Chelsea boutiques like Hung On You and Dandy. About a year later, they opened a small shop in Draycott Avenue and, later, a headquarters in Sackville Street, and became the Hip shoestore. Very often, their stuff would be overdone, and it tended to fall apart in a hurry, considering that their price range was £10 to £20, but they *were* first with high boots, zipped to the knee, and they also introduced a number of new materials: snakeskin, canvas, patchwork.

More than with any other form of clothing, though, men's shoes have followed on from female fashion. High boots, after all, derived from Cathy Gale's boots in *The Avengers*, which in turn derived from fetishist boots. Possibly that's why so many male styles have seemed hermaphrodite. What has been needed, badly, has been one new, original designer of generically male men's shoes.

With glasses, however, the influx of fashion has involved no reservations. Before the sixties, if you had bad eyes, you looked terrible and there was nothing much you could do. Now that was changed.

Since the war, the basic shape had been rectangular, horn-

rimmed and National Health, making one look scholarly but sexless. In the mid-fifties, the heavily black-rimmed Madison Avenue frame came in, which took away the weediness but replaced it with a gas chamber severity. But it wasn't till the sixties that glasses were designed to actually look good, almost worth wearing for ornament alone.

The improvement came in two ways – a new variety in the shape of frame, and the use of tints and prescription dark glasses. In both, most of the breakthroughs were made by a firm called Oliver Goldsmith, and they made the major step in 1964, when they brought out a round-framed shape, small-lensed and available in almost any colouring or frame.

Basically, it was the old pre-war National Health shape, much hated, but brought into different context and given great variety of form. Unlike the standard styles, it didn't cut across the shape of the face, and it became fashionable straightaway, though at first mostly with women. Later on, John Lennon adopted it and, in 1967, steel-rimmed, it became one of the badges of Hippie.

After that, nothing much remained to be done. Because they must be functional, glasses can only come in a limited variety of ways, and all the designer can do is to permutate the possibilities at random. This duly happened, and various styles have been fashionable since – Jim McGuinn's Pickwick glasses, for instance, and Peter Fonda's tints in *Easy Rider*. But the crucial thing is just that now, when you go to buy glasses, you can get whatever suits you. You don't feel doomed, or want to hide, or stumble sightless through the rain, pretending you can see.

But of all the fashion innovations of this period, the most satisfying, aesthetically, were the hats of Herbert Johnson in Bond Street.

The original Johnson had made hats for Edward VII, in partnership with a man called Glazier, and the firm had stayed in the Glazier family ever since. Perhaps because of this, it had grown into a refuge, an atmosphere so calm and cosseted that entering it was like stepping back into the womb. Salesmen approached you like father confessors, bringing out hats,

dimpling them softly, placing them with reverence on your brow. Every gesture was performed in gravity and repose and just as long as you stayed inside, you felt safe from all catastrophe.

Until the sixties, Herbert Johnson churned out roughly the same hats as anyone else, trilbys and Homburgs and so forth and, as such, they were going through a very harsh time. Since the war, hat sales had been plummeting. More or less, they seemed redundant, one more casualty in the destruction of the Gentleman.

In the past, hats had had a real social function. Probably more than any other garment, they had been symbolic of status and class. The topper and the bowler, the trilby and cap – each placed its wearer precisely. But now all that was dying – hats were no longer required for respectability and, in their present form, they had nothing else to recommend them. They were unwieldy, sweaty, and, nine times out of ten, ugly as well. They kept the rain off, but that wasn't enough, and most of the big stores were forced to shut down their hat departments totally, or at least to shrink them.

At this moment of maximum gloom, Tim Glazier began to design for Herbert Johnson, He was thirtyish, a grandson of the first hatting Glazier and, like all his family, hats dominated his life.

He was realistic. He understood that the trilby and bowler were done for, and so were hats in general, as everyday wear. Even so, he loved them and was loyal. He believed them to be potentially the most dramatic and expressive of all male garments, and so he set out to revive them, not to be functional but as fashion, as 'instruments of amusement'.

First, he began to make caps, which before had always been confined to the working class, and he started the student-cap fashion, which led to other styles, corduroy and leather caps, mock-yachting caps, caps like small helmets.

Then, in 1965, he turned his attention to the hat proper and produced what he called 'the Big Hat', wide-brimmed and high-crowned, so that it felt like a sail on the skull and made one float down the street like Cleopatra's barge.

Writing in *Style Weekly*, Glazier described them perfectly: 'What is the magic of the Big Hat? To discover one has only to put one on. Immediately the back straightens, the chest swells, the shoulders square. One is looking down on the world from an unfamiliar height. A new grace and dignity enters one's movements: manners and chivalry return . . .'

He was right, they were quite magnificent. Alone of all English designs in this decade, they were worthy to be put beside the best styles of any age: white felt, with a thick black band, or furl-brimmed velours, of bottle green or cream, deep purple or chocolate, to be stroked and tilted and preened in forever: 'High and noble crowns, wide flowing brims that have life and movement. Hats that are soft and flexible, that can be shaped to the character and mood of the wearer with a flick, a pull and a pinch. This is how hats should be. . . .'

Yet even here, there was one drawback left, the same drawback that ran through all of sixties male fashion: you had to look good yourself to look good in a wide-brimmed hat.

Almost without exception, male fashion in this time was devised for a new vision of the master-race, the Superman. Instead of the chest and beefcake shoulders of the thirties, there was a fresh ideal, best typified by Mick Jagger – long-legged and lean-thighed, with no arse and no stomach and no chest, a twenty-six-inch waist and long hair and a *belle-laide* face. All of this, plus California flesh and easy bones.

If you could manage all that, you were home free; but if you couldn't, most fashions made you look foolish; and the vast majority of Englishmen couldn't. As a breed, they were overweight and white-fleshed, awkward of movement and spotty of complexion. More often than not, when they tried to buy tight pants or a tapered shirt, they couldn't squeeze themselves in. And that is *one* of the reasons why, despite all the fanfarings of the media, high fashion remained less than five per cent of the total menswear market.

14

The High Street Response

Faced by the sudden fact of Carnaby Street, and of male fashion generally, the High Street wasn't best pleased. It could hardly pretend shock, since some such development had clearly been inevitable. Still, now that it had actually happened, the industry felt grim.

After all, it was one thing to speak blithely of progress and hold fashion shows and wander slowly in circles; it was quite another to wake up one morning in a world full of see-through orange underpants and have to take action.

At first, the retailers pretended that nothing was changed. Rolling over against the wall, they stuck their heads back beneath the bedclothes and waited for things to return to normal. With some justification, they thought Carnaby Street amateurish and cheapskate, and they believed it would collapse. As late as 1962, the executives of one London store were keeping a book on the date of John Stephen's bankruptcy.

As time passed, however, and Carnaby Street kept on flourishing, it became hopeless to wait any longer and they crawled out into the light. 'Brave New World,' said *Men's Wear* magazine, and the wheels began to grind.

Even now, nothing basic happened. To the outsider, it was plain that Carnaby Street meant the beginning of a whole new attitude by young Englishmen towards their clothes and that, if the mass industry wanted to win teenage custom and keep it, they'd have to make some fairly radical changes; but, to the industry itself, this made no sense. For the moment, the great majority of its market was middle-aged, and therefore not affected by Carnaby Street. As yet, there was no falling

off in profits and, just so long as that lasted, everything could ride.

Meanwhile, the trade treated His Clothes like a freak, a flying saucer, worthy of study but not to be trusted. A few spies were sent along, to report on what was happening and, as a result, a few of Stephen's ideas began to be echoed and watered down for the High Street. Shirt manufacturers, like Raelbrook and Tern, began to produce ranges of colours, and suit manufacturers thought more about lightweights. Everyone sold brightly patterned ties.

But there was no real reassessment. Instead of drawing back, rethinking itself at every level and then setting a fresh course, the industry merely dabbled.

In the background, there were three major problems which had been confronting the High Street for over a decade and which it still showed no signs of getting to grips with. These were, first, how to adjust to the young Englishman's changing self-image, to the fact that snobbism was no longer the only factor in his taste; second, how to exploit Casualwear, which must sooner or later replace the suit as the dominant field of menswear; and, third, how to use man-made fibres.

The first was simply a matter of generation. Since the major retailers and manufacturers were all run by men in middle age or later, they didn't feel the changes themselves and, therefore, couldn't recognize it in others. Until some younger men were put in positions of power, the youth market would remain incomprehensible.

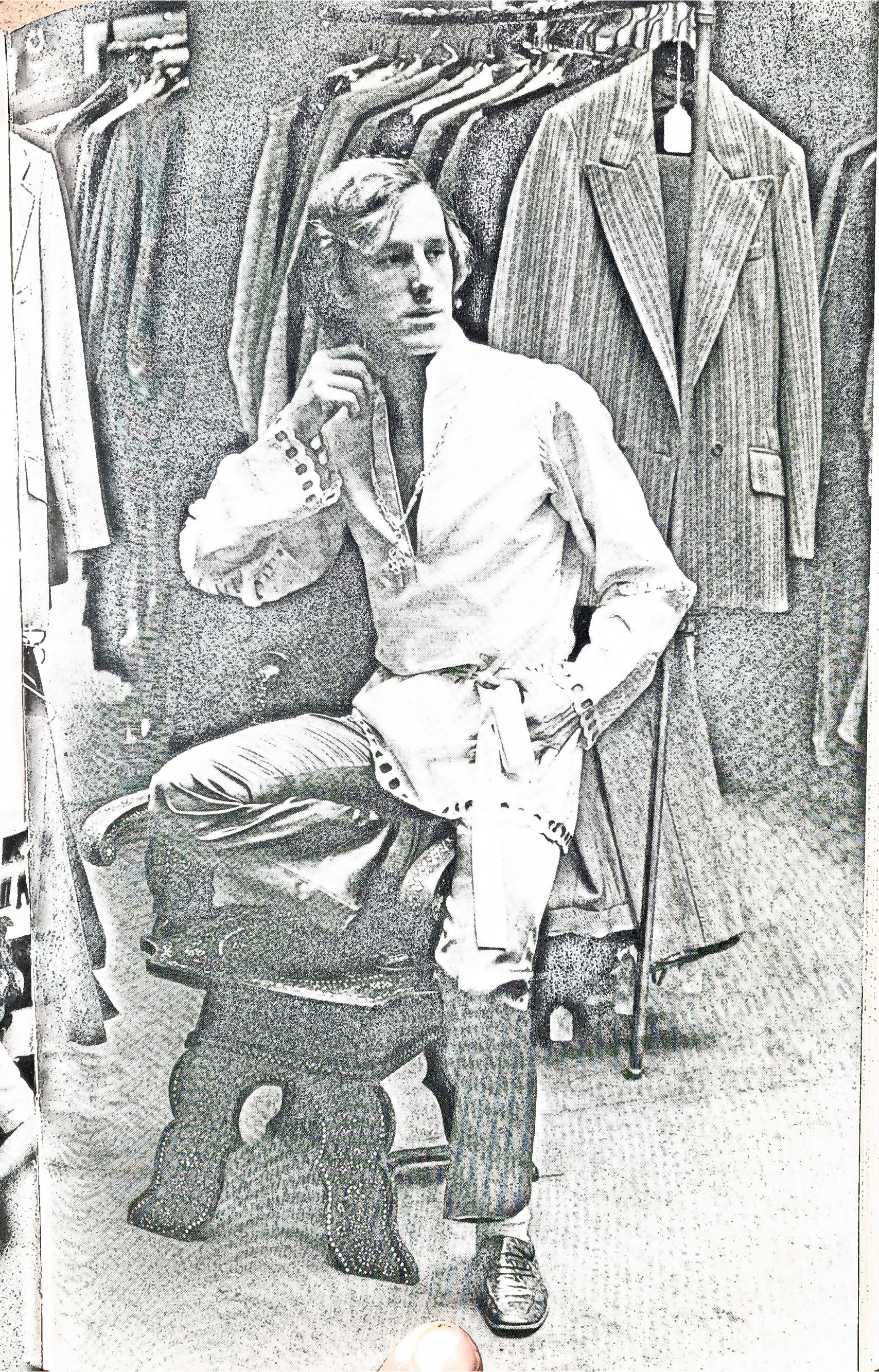
The other two were less excusable. The market for Casualwear was just as much middle-aged as teenage, if not more so, and the untapped potential was infinite. By the end of this century, men's leisure time was likely to outweigh their work-hours and, in that case, casuals would become all-important. But for some reason, they weren't approached like that, as a long-term development. Instead, they muddled along from season to season, in a smog of woolly cardigans and baggy pants, as though casual must always equal sloppy.

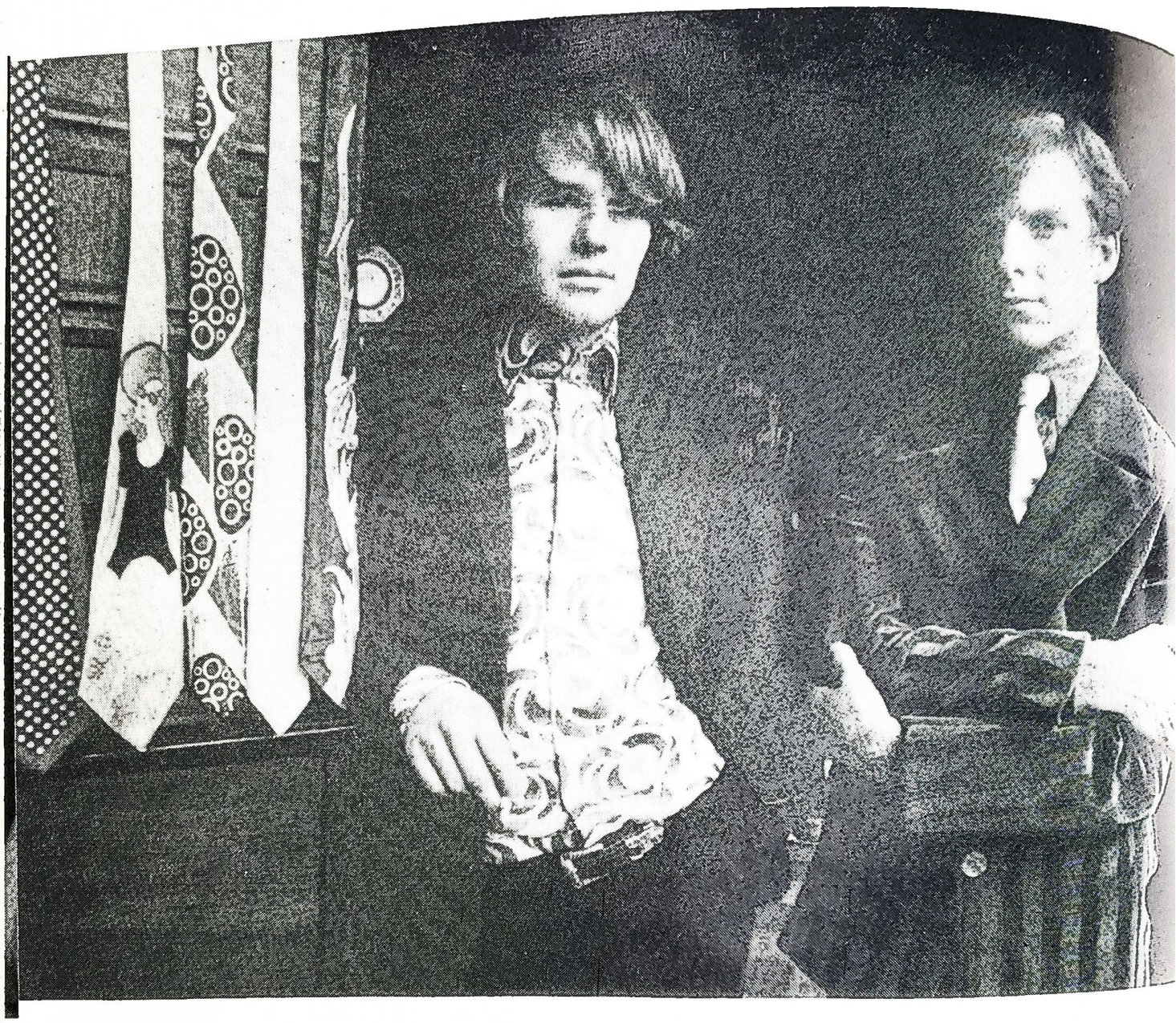
With synthetics, the problem was much the same. Quite obviously, both for economic and time-saving reasons, they

26 John Stephen. When he started he seemed revolutionary : now he tends to be taken for granted, and the press which once lionised him has now turned against him. Nevertheless, his long-term effect on English menswear remains enormous. Quite simply, there would have been no Carnaby Street, and no mass-market teenage fashion, without him.

27, 28 *and* 29
When Hardy Amies (*left*) linked up with Hepworths in 1962, it was the first time that the High Street multiple tailors had thought of Design, and the first time that Englishmen en masse were exposed to High Fashion. For this alone, Amies has been a central figure; his actual designs have been disappointing, however.

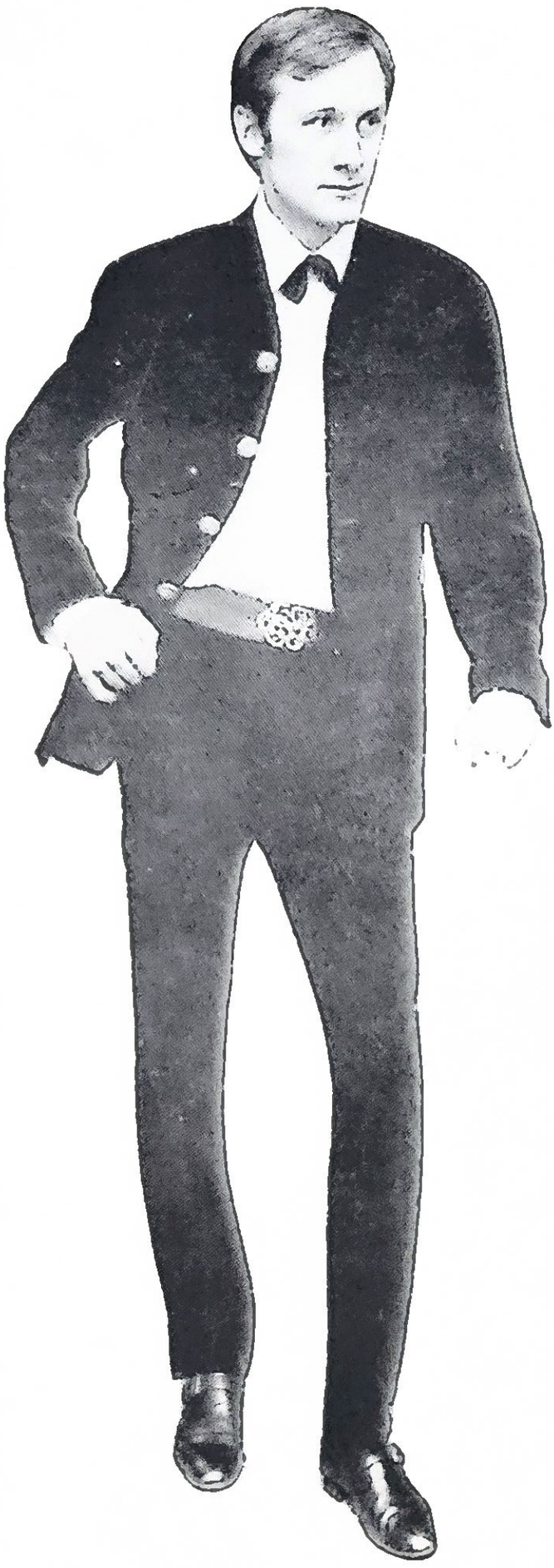
Tom Gilbey (*below*) has been the best and most inventive of younger English designers; but Michael Fish (*right*) has been more publicised. From 1967 on, Fish produced a stream of mock-Hippie styles, translated into High Fashion terms and prices. For three seasons, he remained the most celebrated shopkeeper in London.

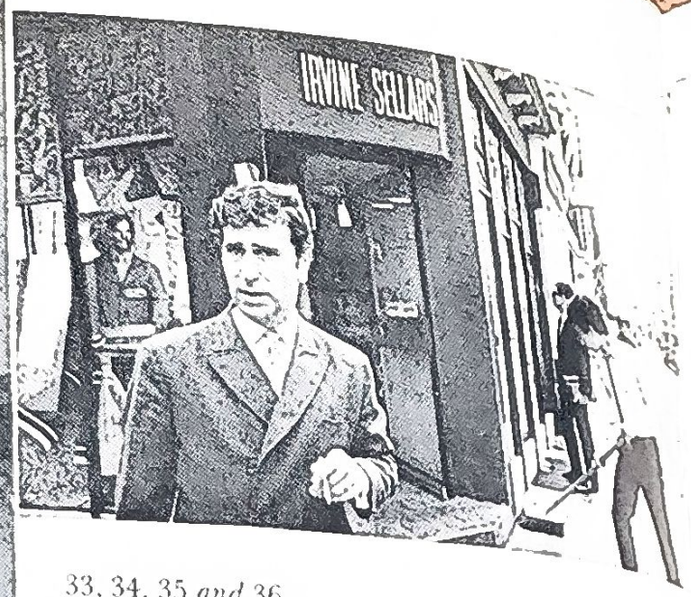




30, 31 *and* 32
During the early sixties, there was a revival in Dandyism, centred on a small group of upper-class malcontents. Two of the leading protagonists were Michael Rainey (*above left*) and Christopher Gibbs, both of whom combined elegance with innovation, a sense of past with intimations of Hippie to come. The movement reached its peak in 1965, when Rainey opened Hung On You.

Rupert Lycett Green (*opposite, left*) helped start Blades in 1962, to cater for the Dandies and has remained among the most fashionable, and most expensive, tailors ever since. By 1970, however, his pre-eminence on both counts was being challenged by Tommy Nutter (*opposite, right*).





33, 34, 35 *and* 36
In the wake of John Stephen, businessmen descended on Carnaby Street in hordes and made their fortune from it. Two of the most successful were Warren Gold (*left*) who traded under the name Lord John; and Irvine Sellars (*above*).

Tommy Roberts (*below*) opened Mr Freedom in 1969 and started a craze for Fun Clothes, as camp and outrageous as he could devise. The fashion press loved it, but the mass menswear market seemed to be moving in the opposite direction, back towards sobriety.

Peter Golding (*opposite*) emerged with Tom Gilbey as one of the brighter, more imaginative, young designers.

37 Right at the start of the sixties, Pierre Cardin created a new silhouette for suits – long, lean and close-fitting. All suits since have followed this blueprint; and Cardin himself has been the designer most admired by other designers.

held the future of menswear: plastic clothes, throwaway clothes, to be used like a kleenex. But no one made them look good. Just like in the fifties, High Street synthetics still looked cheap and inferior, a menswear version of margarine.

As long as these blocks remained, the industry would be stalemated, and no number of coloured shirts or Brave New World editorials made any odds. In that sense, the immediate impact of Carnaby Street was minimal.

The one large exception was Austin Reed, a chain store with forty-five branches across the country, not a giant on the level of Montague Burton or Hepworths but hardly insignificant. In 1967, it started something called Cue, a high-fashion boutique within its Regent Street headquarters.

Austin Reed wasn't the first store to make innovations; only the largest. In the early sixties, Jaeger had launched a new advertising campaign, under the slogan Young Jaeger in an attempt to recover lost ground. Before the war, they had been very important, almost the only large store concerned with male dress as fashion, but their progress during the forties and fifties had been undistinguished. Now they re-emerged strongly.

They unearthed a first-rate designer, Edward Lloyd, and sold knee-length lancer coats, slim well-cut suits and tab-collared shirts. For several years, they were *the* fashionable middle-class store. Where Cecil Gee had always had connotations of flashiness, and John Michael was often uninspired, Jaeger was genuinely smart: 'The epitome of tasteful but go-ahead dressing,' says Geoffrey Aquilina-Ross, most influential of English fashion journalists.

They didn't follow through, however. They let Edward Lloyd go and, gradually, they became less intriguing. In any case they had never created a separate high fashion department like Cue – the first to do that was Simpsons in Piccadilly, who opened a department called Trend in 1965. Then, Aquascutum, the raincoat specialists in Regent Street, followed suit; and Harrods and Moss Bros joined in as well with Way In and One Up respectively.

What made Cue different and more important than these

was its nationwide scope. It hired a man in his late twenties, called Colin Woodhead, who had been men's fashion editor at *Town* magazine and had true missionary fervour, and put him in charge. In his hands, Cue was vastly successful.

He was not orgiastic. He didn't plunge into Carnaby Street fantasias. Nevertheless, compared with what had gone before, Cue went very far. It put no limitations on colour, and its shirts were tapered, its trousers flared. Instead of hiring its own designers, it bought in shrewdly, both from England and the Continent, and if it didn't actually lead fashion it followed close behind.

Selling suits for around £30, and shirts and trousers for £7 to £10, it formed a bridge between high fashion and Carnaby Street, and catered to what are called the Young Executives – careerists between the ages of twenty and forty, with money, vanity, and the desire not to sink without a struggle. From Regent Street it grew quickly to more than twenty departments, all over England and, within two years, it was accounting for roughly a fifth of Austin Reed's turnover, which is over £8 million.

At this point, it became unnecessary to keep Cue separate from the rest of the store. The special departments were shut down and Cue merchandise was sold in amongst the standard Austin Reed ranges, so that there was no barrier left between fashion and just plain clothes.

This was not greatly publicized, because fashion writers are only interested in London but, nationally, Cue had been really important. Five years before, if anyone had predicted it, they'd have been laughed off. The idea that you could take fashion to Cardiff or Sheffield or Birmingham, sell it without apology, and still make a runaway profit – it was unthinkable; it had happened.

The point was not that Cue had been overwhelmingly brilliant. Rather the opposite, in fact – it had been fair, no more than that. But, in a way, this is what made it such a good test-case. If it had been a work of genius, one could have dismissed it as freakish; but, as it was strictly mortal, its message was unavoidable.

It broke no rules, produced no inspirations. For myself, I always found its clothes a bit flavourless and, certainly, it did nothing that other shops could not have aspired to. What it had was enthusiasm, above all, and nerve, a little flair, a great deal of self-belief. Clearly, that was enough.

Won over, other retailers now began to adopt the same approach. There was no sudden awakening – in England, there never is – but gradually things began to move. Companies as large as Marks & Spencers and Hornes, all produced fashion ranges, and by the end of the sixties the new flexibility was developing fast.

Only the biggest of the multiple tailors didn't shift. Montague Burton and Hepworths, Associated Tailors, Alexandres – when you walked down the High Street and passed them by, there were still the same windows full of grey, and you still couldn't tell them one from another. In twenty years, or thirty or forty, nothing seemed to have changed.

They were the basis of all English menswear. Until they changed, everything else was only preparation. But as the seventies started, and lesser companies did somersaults all around them, it became inevitable that the change must come, and come soon.

15

Carnaby Street, Part Two

There were two ways that Carnaby Street could have gone. At the start it was vulgarian and sloppy but had real vitality and, just possibly, it might have got better. Conceivably, it might have jettisoned its crassness without losing energy and then its development would have been intriguing.

That is not what happened. Instead, as soon as it had made its first killing, it was invaded by numbers of vultures and, by 1965, any spark that it had had was gone.

Already, it had been deserted by the Mods and, within the next couple of years, it was deserted by all the fashionables, who had thought it cute to start with but now thought it common. Only suckers remained and the street was jam-packed with boutiques like bordellos, working on middle-aged tourists from Kansas and Wisconsin, ageing queens, very young kids from the suburbs and the provinces – predestined victims who believed, absolutely, in Swinging London.

The basic premise was that new equalled good, that impact was the same as quality. Music blared from every doorway, salesmen grabbed you and cajoled you like pimps. Coloured streamers were festooned above the pavements, and the clothes were like showgirl lipsticks: flaming orange, cherry red, candyfloss pink.

Behind it all, over and over, there was repeated the same dire threat: *'If you buy this, you're In; if you don't, you're Out; if you fall behind, you're dead.'*

Commercially, this policy was triumphant. At any one moment, the people who can be hyped far outnumber those who can't and, for five years, Carnaby Street was one long goldrush. Boutiques for girls and for children squeezed in among the menswear, and poster shops and toy shops and

souvenir shops, and a million Union Jacks, imprinted on tea-trays, T-shirts, and shopping bags.

Nothing seemed to fail. No matter how crude the stunt, or how grotesque the fancy dress, it went right on selling. Just so long as its label said Carnaby Street it couldn't miss.

Inevitably, in the midst of all this there were a few exceptions and, of these, the most notable was John Stephen himself.

Over the years, he was much abused. As he ceased to be fashionable, so it became chic to slander him, to call him incompetent or a conman or both and, of all the people I interviewed for this book, only Michael Fish had praise for him.

The criticism was unjust. Certainly, Stephen had never been a great designer and, as standards rose elsewhere, His Clothes looked increasingly clumsy and dated. But his contribution remained immense. After all, he'd been the beginning. Without him, there would have been no menswear boom at all, or not in the same form and, for that, he deserved some loyalty from those he had spawned.

Whatever else, he was not opportunist. At bottom, he was a true Scot, puritan and house-proud, and the dragging-down of Carnaby Street offended him greatly.

Because he had begun it, he saw it as private property, a symbol of his own life, and he cared that it shouldn't be disreputable. When he spoke of it, his voice would take on an almost evangelical ring and, the more that his rivals lived by gimmicks, the more Stephen himself developed principles.

For one thing, he chose not to expand. Gradually he sold all his shops scattered around London and, after 1965, he concentrated full-time on Carnaby Street, determined to repel boarders. Instead of twenty shops, he only had eight and His Clothes did not become a public company, as one might have expected. It was worth £1 million anyhow, so that Stephen was hardly a failure, but there's no doubt that he could have been richer still if he had been more ruthless. Slowly, his power faded; his name appeared less often in the press; and others replaced him. By 1970, he had become almost an historic personage, a hero from another age.

He was now in his middle thirties but looked ten years younger. In fact, he looked terrific, as much like James Dean as ever: the same hollowed cheeks, the same perfect bones. Although he had no delinquent past, it was a face one sees sometimes among the grease and acne of teenage gangs, in Liverpool or Newcastle or Glasgow – beautiful, shut-in, desperate.

He was not tycoon-like. When I met him he was screwed up tight in shyness and started speaking just above a whisper, stonewalling most of my questions. Obviously, interviewers were not his idols. 'First the press will build you up and then it will try to destroy you,' he said. 'You have to be careful all the time.'

When he did deals, apparently, he changed completely. He was decisive, could be quite brutal. But outside that, he froze. 'I'm not close to anyone,' he said. 'I love my parents and my family (he has nine brothers and sisters), and I trust the people who work for me. Apart from them, I have no friends.'

He said that he worried too much and his nerves were bad and it's true that he seemed unhappy. He was isolated and insecure and, even if it was against one's principles to feel sorry for neurotic millionaires, it was hard not to care, because he had an infinite melancholic charm and his bones, after all, were marvellous. His employees loved and protected him; one understood why.

Beyond His Clothes, he planned nothing: 'It's my life. It's all I care about.

'I would like to get married and have a family but the business takes up all my time and thoughts. I don't care about possessions. I'll probably buy a villa in the South of France, and I'll probably buy a house in Brighton, and I'll probably buy a new house in London. In fact, I've just bought one, in Wimpole Street. But I'm not bothered, I may never move in – anything might happen, I don't know.

'I'm not a boisterous person. If I had a week to myself, I wouldn't do anything wild. Perhaps I'd go down to Cornwall and lie in the sand, and sail, and walk my dog. I'd go alone,' he said, looking down through his window, down into

Carnaby Street, which was all his invention. 'Just me and my dog is enough.'

John Stephen apart, the street made most money for Warren Gold, whose shops were called Lord John, and for Irvine Sellars, who owned a chain of bisexual or unisexual boutiques and called them Mates. Their clothes were neither better nor worse than the rest of Carnaby Street. They were business-men, I suppose, and they made profits. By 1970, Gold had eight shops and had just done a deal that would bring it up to thirty; Sellars had thirty already.

When I interviewed him, Gold wore a see-through body-shirt over a golden-tanned spare tyre and was not communica-tive: 'Let's make this fast, young man – I've got a very busy day.'

Sellars, on the other hand, was rather sweet. He was thirty-three, with a toupée and anxious eyes, and belonged very much in the Jewish ragtrade tradition, as do others in Carnaby Street: Warren Gold, for one, and Stanley Adams, and Sidney Brent.

Like most of them, he started out from a stall in an East End market. Then he saved up, opened his first shop, in St Albans, and moved in fast on Carnaby Street. Now he had his own factory in Neasden, and a house in Brighton, and a very large flat overlooking Marble Arch, impersonal and full of antiques which he had paid a friend to choose for him. 'This is one of the biggest flats in London, and I can prove that,' he said. 'It has ten rooms, three bathrooms and the furnishings are worth a fortune.'

He was not villainous. It would be pleasant to depict the Carnaby Street operators as bloodsuckers, ruthless exploiters, milking innocent kids of their very last dime; but Sellars wasn't like that. 'I'm in business,' he said, 'and when you're in business, your personal tastes come second to your profits, or they should do. People try to get at me but I'm not a monster – I'm human, like everyone else.

'I run a chauffeur-driven Rolls but it isn't the money that matters to me, it's the sense of achievement. Sometimes I get a feeling of uneasiness but then I reason it out and think *What*

the hell, what do I have to worry about? I'm riding the crest of the wave.

'I'm in this for just two reasons. One is to make money, so that I can go public; and the other is to serve the public and give them better value for money. That's the truth,' he said. 'I'm idealistic in my way.'

Seated in his mansion, he seemed joyless but said that he had fun. 'I can go to a dump and, if I'm with the right people, I can make it great. Ask anyone and they'll tell you. Oh, you'd be surprised.

'Unfortunately, wherever I go I tend to look at the commercial aspects. When I'm in a restaurant or a nightclub, I'm always calculating, to see if it's run businesslike and how it could improve itself. It stops me from relaxing.'

Clearly, both he and Warren Gold were going to end up as very rich men indeed. But the best clothes in Carnaby Street over the last five years have come from Take Six, a string of boutiques co-owned and driven by Sidney Brent.

Brent is now fifty, a smooth man, who used to be a jazz drummer. In the early sixties, he used to have a shop in Romford, called Brent & Collins, which was possibly the best of all Mod shops – cheap, fast, and, unlike Carnaby Street, never bullying.

He came up West in 1966, opening in Carnaby Street and Wardour Street and, very quickly, his competitors learned to loathe him. For one thing, he undercut their prices and, for two, he made clothes that fitted and didn't fall apart and, for three, he had more ideas in a month than they had in a year.

He wasn't a genius designer, and didn't pretend to be; his gifts were as a middleman – the way he took high-fashion styles and translated them for a teenage market, without destroying them utterly. Whatever the glossy-mag designers produced – Regency, jump suits or safari suits, leather maxi-coats, white silk suits – Brent would be the first to spot it and adapt it, selling suits at £15, trousers and shirts for about £5. In essence, he was a copyist, as Carnaby Street had always been, but at least he did it cheaply and well.

In fact, he was exactly what the whole street should have

been and wasn't – not original but sharp, anti-bullshit, full of flair and action.

Partly because of him, and partly because rock-bottom had been reached, Carnaby Street has tended to improve a bit in the last two years. Faced down by Brent, it has overcharged less and paid a little more attention to make, and it has also calmed itself.

This was inevitable: after eight years of non-stop hysteria, a certain weariness had set in. Every violence of colour and fit had already been perpetrated, every possible excess, and the boutiques began to backtrack. They still churned out the same burlesques for tourists but they began to mix in touches of sobriety. Grey three-piece suits reappeared among the pink, pale blue shirts among the fluorescent puce. The new conservatism wasn't very much better made than the jesters' suits; but the movement was clearly towards quiet, and the pretence of quality: 'In the end,' said Stanley Adams, who owns Adam, West One, 'it's nice to be sane.'

At the same time, the Carnaby Street shopkeepers were making great efforts to diversify, heading up the market into Kings Road, and into Oxford Street, where the custom was older and a bit more staid. Thus, if Carnaby itself should ever collapse, they'd be well cushioned against the fall.

For the moment, however, the bonanza continued. Already it had grown all kinds of tentacles, down side streets and alleys, so that it had become a whole self-contained neighbourhood, and two-level precincts were being built, traffic was being banned and still there were plans for further extensions. 'Believe me, the sky's the limit,' said Irvine Sellars, and the G.L.C. seemed to feel the same way.

Who shopped there? Nobody knew. A great deal of income derived from Americans, and from sight-seers in general, but then several million people passed through Carnaby Street each year, spending several million pounds, and they couldn't *all* be tourists. 'Who are they?' said John Stephen, smiling his sorrowing smile. 'They're nobody in particular; they're Mister Average.'

One day, presumably, it was bound to collapse. In months

or in years, people would tire of it, would see through it at last and it would fall apart, quite suddenly. Even then, it wouldn't be really done with. 'The street itself may go,' said Stephen. 'The changes it made will still be there.'

16

Hippie, Part One

In the winter of 1965, Michael Rainey opened a shop called Hung On You, which was simultaneously the last fling of dandyism and the first intimation of Hippie, of strangenesses to come.

This was towards the end of the Adlib period, though before complete disillusion had set in, and it emerged from a changing atmosphere, an increasing relaxation.

To a large extent, this was the influence of drugs. Under dope, all rules began to seem constricting, and certainly the rules of dress. Detail seemed petty somehow, all that preparation and fuss; petty and false. What felt more important was sweep and flow, the sense of freedom.

Already, in 1964, Christopher Gibbs had ordered the first flowered shirts, made up by Star Shirts of Wardour Street, and from then on, colour and patterns were unrestricted. There were still well-cut suits to be worn, but they were more and more overshadowed by bizarreries: Moroccan robes, Indian silks, Edwardian and Victorian remnants found in chests, small treasures rescued from market stalls. Perfectionism, and conventional good taste, were rejected; imagination was everything now and Hung On You was more like a toyshop, a palace of treats, than any known clothes store. 'When you met Michael Rainey,' says Gibbs, 'you didn't think "This man is a menswear retailer".'

It was in Chelsea and splendid: inexpensive but unskimped, dazzling in range and invention, drawing its ideas not only from Rainey himself but from his friends – Gibbs, Tara Browne, Julian Ormsby-Gore. Its most usual suit was cut high and double-breasted, close-waisted and flared at the hips, and it might come in ice-cream linen, or pistachio green or,

most often, in velvet, perhaps black or maroon or chocolate. Then there were extravagantly printed shirts and big-buckled belts, and the Chelsea Cobbler's knee-high boots.

The ambience was complex. On one hand, there was a strong whiff of the past ('Memories of a more gracious age,' says Christopher Gibbs) in the textures and general elegance. Velvets and satins and flowing lines – there was dandyism in this, though of a more sensual, less ascetic kind than Brummell's and a feeling of space, a lack of clutter, time to spare.

On the other hand, in their brashness, Rainey's designs opposed this. In their wild profusion of colours, their lack of any restraints, they belonged totally to the sixties. Accordingly, there was always a certain schizophrenia: when you shopped at Hung On You, you felt like both Oscar Wilde and Captain Marvel, locked up inside one body.

It worked. From past and present, and future, influence and cross-influence, Rainey wound up with something all his own, a personal montage. In my view, he was the most original designer that English menswear has produced.

He had great influence. For one thing, he had fun and that was something that other shopkeepers weren't used to. Because they had needed to make profits to survive, they had always taken it deadly seriously and saved and scuffled. But Rainey had money anyhow, and it was easy for him to relax. At Hung On You, for the first time, there was the feeling that clothes were a game, that they didn't exist to cover your flesh or keep you warm but purely as decoration, to make you feel good.

In this, he created an approach that has prevailed in Pop fashion ever since, whether at Mr Fish or Mr Freedom, Granny Takes A Trip, David Elliott or among women's designers like Zandra Rhodes or Thea Porter: 'The whole scene goes back to him,' says Michael Fish. 'He started Fun Clothes.'

If Rainey was a pre-Hippie, there were other precursors as well. By now, cabals were forming, energies gathering. Pop groups like the Rolling Stones, superannuated Beats like

Pete Brown and Adrian Henri, and assorted druggies, folk singers and buddhists were all moving in the same direction, as yet unnamed. Bob Dylan records were being played and there were mutterings of Brotherhood, Love, Nirvana. As yet, however, the word Hippie was only used spasmodically, and the style had no definite shape. That came in 1966, in the summer, direct from San Francisco.

As with Beat, English Hippie was taken word for word from the American original and, again like Beat, it was essentially middle-class. In essence, it was a continuation of the same old line, from Beat through the art schools and on through long hair, and it didn't change its motivations.

Its novelty lay in its gentleness. Because it was tied up so deeply with drugs, and drugs at first are so calming, it was much softer than its forebears. Instead of sitting through the night in cellars, or churning out poems and pamphlets, one need only be still and smile and say 'You're beautiful, man, you are beautiful'.

These were very real attractions and, for the next year, euphoria was unconfined. Hippie hadn't yet been taken up by the media, or commercialized. It didn't show up in the hit parade, or in Carnaby Street, or make warm-up laughs for the London Palladium. For the moment, it lurked in the Underground, which was the new name for the Hip élite. It was no more than ten or twenty thousand strong, and everyone involved believed in it with passion.

The heart of it was UFO, a basement club in Tottenham Court Road, and every weekend there would be an all-night session there, at which the new world unfolded.

On these nights, everything that Hippie stood for worked. As there must have been in Haight Ashbury at first, there was a sense of a completely fresh start, all sensation created anew. Underground, there was music and warmth and pleasure, an infinity of marijuana, and everything was shared, everyone thought that they were One.

The Adlib aristocracy took part in it, but this was something different. There were no cliques, no top-team tables. The famous were neither fawned upon nor hassled. They were

drawn into the whole, which involved the full range of middle-class dissent – art students, hipsters, bohemia; and would-be disrupters were pacified, just as hysterics were tranquillized, cynics disarmed, observers involved. Even the drug squad, disguised as freaks but detectable by their boots, would be sucked in: 'Every man a Superstar,' said Paul McCartney, and many believed him.

Clothes came from all over the place. If you had money, you shopped at Hung On You, or at the other new Hip boutiques, like Dandy or Granny Takes A Trip; if you hadn't, you picked up whatever you could: military uniforms from Portobello Road, imported exotica from the East, bits and pieces from markets, and bells, of course, and beads.

The ideal was excess. Deliberately, everything was overdone and exaggerated, garments thrown together at random, colours clashing wildly. With half a dozen scarves and a few more necklaces, and shoulder-length hair, streaming in the wind, one aspired to magnificent mess.

In the traditional sense, this was anti-taste: 'I think of taste as something very boring and meaningless,' said the singer Donovan. 'It makes me think of grey and tired old men.'

Actually, this was great ignorance on his part: taste is not an absolute but evolves constantly and what is good taste in one age may be rotten in the next. During our time, it has been used as a synonym for orthodoxy and politeness but that's a misuse. Good taste, if it can be defined, means whatever works *in its own moment* and certainly, in the sixties, white shirts and baggy grey suits weren't it; but the Rolling Stones were, and so was Hung On You.

Nevertheless, misconceived or not, the fashion of anti-taste was very much a part of the Hip culture, in which it meant to break rules, to go free. 'We accept no restrictions,' said Mark Palmer, pat. 'We're blowing our minds.'

If Hippie dress had a centre, it was a stall in the Chelsea Antique Market, owned by Vernon Lambert and Adrian Emmerton.

Emmerton and Lambert had been waiters together at Parkes, and had been bored and, in 1962, they had opened an

Art Nouveau stall at the antique supermarket, in Marylebone. For a time, they chugged along serenely and then they came across a collection of twenties' Chanel dresses, which excited them more than antiques.

They moved to Chelsea and devoted themselves to clothes full-time. They bought up Regency coats and Victorian frock-coats, Art Nouveau shawls; found some old sailors' trousers and took them in and dyed them, thereby creating some of the first flared jeans in England; picked up odds and sods in junk shops, like old cravats, and resold them. Soon they were flourishing. Twiggy worked for them in her school holidays, while still Lesley Hornby, and the pop groups began to gather.

Then Hippie started, and they came fully into their own. In the winter of 1966/67, Vernon Lambert went to India and came back loaded down with silks. They hung two thousand bells from the ceiling and got to work, selling lace shirts with frills, and three-button T-shirts, hand-dyed in washing machines, and demob suits, tightened; and the Indian silks, made into shirts and scarves and dresses; and wide twenties' ties, and more and more frock-coats. When these last ran out, they replaced them with military uniforms and, all the time, they were disposing of beads by the hundredweight.

'Fancy dress,' says Lambert. 'Whatever we could find, it sold out straightaway,' and at weekends, there were queues all down the stairs, as though this were the Charing Cross Road reborn. 'Everyone came rushing in and grabbed whatever they could lay their hands on, whether it fitted or not,' and the Beatles shopped there, and the Rolling Stones and the Who, and Brigitte Bardot: 'Even Yves St Laurent dropped in to pat our backs. He told us "Keep up the good work, lads" – that pleased us a lot.'

As the fancy dress boom kept growing, others stepped in to milk it. A whole crop of Hippie shops sprang up and, while they weren't as crude in their exploitation as Carnaby Street, they weren't committed either. They enjoyed the fun and games, no doubt, but profit was important as well.

This was new. In the first flush, when Hippie was still confined to the Underground, it had stuck by the original

Haight Ashbury tenets. Believing that a new world had been born, its converts had wanted only to be stoned and ecstatic forever. No one had thought to get rich off it, not straight-away. Now it was spreading and surfacing, and business joined in.

In Portobello Road, Ian Fisk ran I Was Lord Kitchener's Valet and made a killing off military uniforms. At this distance, it isn't possible to say who actually sold them first, but certainly Fisk plugged them hardest and they caught on hugely. They were cheap, bright and extremely insulting to the Establishment, in their mockery of the Empire's lost glory. As such, they were most desirable and they caught on beyond the Underground, turned into full-scale Fab Rave gear for teenagers. Very soon, Lord Kitchener had opened extra branches in Soho and Chelsea, and the news was out: *love equals money.*

Meanwhile, in Kingly Street, just off Carnaby Street, there was a shop called Kleptomania, which specialized in beads and bells, and it became the first boutique for identikit Hippies, where they could enter as an office boy and emerge as a fully paid-up Head, decked out in trappings from head to toe, without even having to think.

Tommy Roberts, who now runs Mr Freedom, was the co-owner: 'We started as a junk shop. Not just any old junk, of course – it was always the right junk, like old pictures, posters, Victorian clothes, and we used to do a million things, we'd do anything for a laugh. When the Hippies started, I used to serve in a mask.

'It was a joke but it wasn't cynical. I wasn't a man in an iridescent blue suit, selling love beads and sitting in the back room, with one hand in the till: I was a bit sincere like.'

Hippie was largely a summer sport. Bare feet and silks and universal brotherhoods – these things were not created for an English January. But now, in the summer of 1967, it all caught fire, with the advent of Flower Power.

This was where Hippie, finally, ceased to be a cult and became an industry. 'If you're going to San Francisco, be sure and wear some flowers in your hair,' sang Scott McKenzie, and

it was a number-one hit record all over the world, spawning countless cover versions and imitations. Hippies came to be called Flower Children by the media and they wore flower-printed shirts, flower-printed jackets, flower-printed ties.

The movement became like an onion, or like one of those Russian dolls, with layer within layer. At the centre, there was still the Underground, fully committed; then the amateurs and weekenders who held down jobs but turned into freaks after dark; thirdly, the bourgeois sympathizers, fashion-followers who sampled hash, calling it cannabis, and listened to *Sgt. Pepper;* and fourth, the record companies, poster companies and clothing companies, and the media.

Given what had happened to the Teds and the Mods, the signs should have been ominous. In this diversification and dilution, Hippie was bound to go the same way, lose its passion and force, eventually fall apart.

Once launched, however, the dipper couldn't be stopped; and, in any case, for now, it was exciting. Instead of a few conspirators hidden in a cellar, Hippie had grown into an army, a world full of beautiful persons: 'I could remember walking down the Kings Road and knowing, if I met anyone who looked at all nice, that they'd be a very old friend,' says Christopher Gibbs. 'Now they were everywhere, perfect strangers, and one felt they were taking over.'

At the same time, the Hippie style was changing. In August, the Beatles announced their alignment with the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi and, overnight, everyone started meditating. Military uniforms were forgotten and Eastern symbols ruled unchallenged: joss sticks, silken scarves and kaftans, and high-buttoned Indian jackets with no lapels, and Ravi Shankar.

This was where the Beatles came fully into their own. *Sgt. Pepper* was the Hippie anthem, their tie-up with the Maharishi temporarily put drugs out of fashion (for about two weeks, actually), their every move and statement was taken as a pronouncement. In clothes as well, their power was tremendous.

Over the last couple of years, as they had emerged

from under Brian Epstein's dominance, each of them had developed a personal style: George Harrison berobed and biblical-bearded; John Lennon scholastic, with steel-rimmed granny glasses; Ringo Starr clownish in rainbows of satins and silks. But the best dressed was Paul McCartney, who had a rather domestic style. During a period when everyone else was crucifying themselves with tightness, he had held on to comfort – wide-thighed trousers, sweaters, open-necked shirts. He was careless, gave no sign of trying, but he had a native elegance and the less that he worked on it, the more he looked immaculate. He started one major fashion at least, in his revival of the Fair Isle sweater.

Sartorially, however, the most influential of all figures in this phase was Jimi Hendrix, the black guitarist, who looked barbaric. He grew his hair out long, so that it turned into a fuzzy and tangled halo; he wore the tightest trousers you ever saw, in crushed velvet, and the most hallucinatory patterned shirts, open almost to the waist; he hung medallions and charms from his throat like a voodoo doctor; and in all these things he provided styles that caught on throughout the Hippie spectrum.

Beyond copying pop stars, the other main source of Hippie fashion was ethnic. One by one, all nations were discovered and wrung dry. The mystic East apart, there were Cossack shirts, Peruvian woven handbags, Moroccan robes and rugs and cushions. Above all there were cowboys and indians: buckskin jackets and fringes and high hide boots, Navajo beads.

To all of this, the media reacted with prurience and mock-outrage, as did magistrates, policemen, prospective Tory candidates. Against all the evidence, they decided that Hippie was a movement of violence and licentiousness and, along Fleet Street, it replaced the Mods and Rockers as the fall-guy, the all-purpose explanation of any teenage atrocity.

If all this was wilful distortion, at least it made for a dramatic summer. Hippies found themselves stopped on the streets at random, searched for drugs, pushed around and threatened and, not infrequently, planted; Mick Jagger and

Keith Richard were put on trial; others were put in jail without fuss. Battles raged. Legalize Pot rallies were held and there were clashes with the police. For the first time, the pretence was possible that England was a police state, that marijuana meant martyrdom.

It was marvellous. For years, the rebellious middle class had wished to be wronged and heroic, and here it was happening at last.

To be busted was dreamed-of status: once, in World's End, I remember a hammering on the door and the look on the faces of all those inside – half of fear, yes, but half of masochistic longing, saying *I've been naughty, I have wetted my bed and now you're going to find me.*

Increasingly, this romantic crucifixion was reflected in their looks: Hippies began to appear as Jesus Christ. They grew their hair even longer, their beards more biblical, and their eyes and hands were saintly. Seated cross-legged with the Maharishi, swaddled in robes, the Beatles raised their eyes to heaven and, afterwards, the central self-image of Hippie was one of oppression – *I am misunderstood, sinned against, yet I am forgiving.*

As long as the summer lasted everything was fine. Never before had there been a season so jam-packed. Flower Power and meditation, *Sgt. Pepper*, the hounding of the Stones and Legalize Pot, New Mexico and India – the permutations seemed infinite.

But when autumn came, and the rain and cold, the impetus disappeared. Among the Underground, a series of rifts emerged, opposing factions; among the floaters there was simply a staleness. The media had hammered too hard, it had been too shrill and relentless: already, the rituals had been exhausted. Within six months of their greatest splendour, they were boring.

The film *Bonnie and Clyde* came out and started a fashion for gangsters, which replaced bells and beads. At Kleptomania, there were rows of double-breasted suits, and correspondent shoes, and hand-painted ties, all very much in the style of Charing Cross Road just after the war. They sold but

were no substitute for the summer. They weren't a religion, or a new beginning; they were fashion, that's all, and anti-climatic.

When the following summer came round, there was a certain revival and there were new styles, new games, new music; but there were no further ecstasies: the world had not been changed, after all.

17
Designers

During the fifties, the word 'design' was not much used in menswear. Clothes were styled by retailers or by manufacturers and, in either case, the process was much too mundane to be glorified with titles.

Then Hepworths made their deal with Hardy Amies and things changed. In its unease and insecurity, the industry felt in need of a cure-all, a new magic recipe, and the designer seemed suitable.

In the fantasy, he was a man with ideas. If ever you felt yourself flagging, you could call on him and he came along in a pink voile shirt, his portfolio under his arm. With a few deft strokes of his felt-tipped pen, he revolutionized your business, doubled your profits and got your picture in the Sunday supplements. Overnight, all your problems would disappear.

It was a pretty dream and, throughout the sixties, the designer was heroic. The phrase itself – 'fashion design' – acquired a certain mystic ring, as though it masked all kinds of complex and unguessable arts. Like the consultant and the co-ordinator, the designer became a medicine man, a voodoo doctor of his age.

Such mumbo-jumbo was only necessary because the menswear trade, customers and retailers alike, had lost the ability to do its thinking for itself. After a hundred and fifty years of inertia, it had now become important to be fast and flexible again, but the industry had forgotten how. Through inactivity, it had become impotent and that's why it raised up the designer, as a costume equivalent to the priest or the therapist, to help it get its balls back.

In the long run, however, the designer's usefulness had to be more than purely therapeutic. To justify his continued ex-

istence, he had to come up with tangible and original ideas and, in the women's field, there were several figures who did exactly that: Mary Quant, Ossie Clark, Foale and Tuffin, and so forth.

In menswear, this didn't seem to work. Apart from Hardy Amies, most English designers came out of nowhere, with no previous track record and they didn't balance out their inexperience by any special talents. They wished to design, that was all, and usually they did it rather badly. As Eric Joy says, Christopher Gibbs outgamed half of them put together and he, after all, was only a customer.

Many of them came, originally, from the male fashion school at the Royal College of Art. This was started in 1964, on a £20,000 grant from Hepworths, and it was run until 1968 by Janey Ironside.

Professor Ironside was terrific. Since the mid-fifties, she'd played a bigger part than almost anyone in encouraging the new wave in female fashion, and it wasn't all her fault that the men's school fell flat.

But the students themselves were distressing. There were exceptions, of course, but on the whole, they were mimsy and self-inflated, capable of doodling pretty diagrams but quite without the strength and flair to survive in the open market. Their annual fashion show established itself among the campest, most indulgent events in the menswear calendar.

Having graduated, they poured forth with their diplomas and, at first, bug-eyed with the thought of design, the manufacturers hired them. Almost always, though, the results were catastrophic. The students had no conception of the emotional or economic realities of the High Street trade, and they didn't much want to find out. Instead, they wanted to be groovy and do little drawings.

Plunged into the industry, up in Leeds or Bradford, they sank without trace. Coming after the cloisters of the Royal College, they found the real trade boorish and ugly, and they wouldn't adapt. Defiant, they turned out the same fey conceits as before; soon enough, they'd be fired.

It wasn't entirely their own fault. The manufacturers, for

their part, were often unimaginative and retrograde, and they thought of designers as mascots, attractive as status symbols but not to be taken seriously.

Simon Foster is a case in point: Janey Ironside considers him the best of all her students and, after he left college, he got a job with Emu Wools in Manchester. He didn't last long: 'They had no idea,' he says. 'They thought I was a joke. They never did anything I designed and I got so frustrated; I used to camp it up and dress outrageously, all *crêpes* and chains and dyed hair, just to shock them. I was beaten up three times.'

One understands the frustration; but the arrogance of many of the designers has made it hard to sympathize fully. 'Everyone in the factories, they're all over seventy, they're just little old faces and, if they hear the word menswear, they die,' says Anthony Price, another RCA graduate, who now works for a London wholesalers called Sterling Cooper. 'I can't do anything exotic, because the little old women won't make it up. I go into the factories and try to tell them but they won't listen. I've tried to teach them with my own fair hands, all the eighty-year-old crones and old men monsters; but they just won't listen.'

In all this squalor, three designers – Tom Gilbey, Peter Golding and Edward Lloyd – have remained consistently professional and they've all been successful; none of them has derived from the RCA.

Of these, Gilbey has been the best, the most influential and has received the most publicity. He is thirty years old, a man of fanatic energies and enthusiasms, who was first successful designing for John Michael and then set up his own consultancy, in 1966. To begin with, he was more successful in Germany than at home but, after a couple of years, he opened a shop in Sackville Street, as a showcase, and he has been increasingly lionized.

More than anyone, he was responsible for launching the safari suit in this country – a lightweight tropical jacket, belted, with four button-down pockets – and he also mounted major campaigns for the jumpsuit and, less successfully, for men's short trousers.

His great strength lay in his commitment. At any given moment, the majority of designers tend to be working along roughly the same lines, so that it's hardly ever possible to say exactly who was first with any one style. The safari suit is usually associated with Yves St Laurent, and four English designers claim to have done it before Tom Gilbey. Quite possibly, they may all be right – it's irrelevant. What counts is only who did it best and pushed it with most conviction, and that's where Gilbey scores.

Because he is obsessive, he is disliked in the trade. Most of the people in menswear are secretly bored by it and, when Gilbey roars in and begins to burn, they get embarrassed. 'Very nice bloke,' a competitor told me, 'but sometimes he frightens me.'

It is true that Gilbey cares. He is a crop-haired man, very precise, and fascinated by violence, with a deal of ambivalence towards it ('That Nazi look, it's awful, it's so exciting'); and when he starts to talk about clothes, he lights up like a pinball machine. His hands fly, and his sentences skate and skitter.

The background violence shows in his designs, which have an almost militaristic neatness and strength – a hardness and severity, a geometric exactness of line. 'I love simplicity,' he says. 'I'm influenced by all uniforms, whether it's tropical khaki or Nazi brownshirts – I love the butchness, the marvellous crispness.

'Most of all, I'm influenced by the American campus look, it's so classic and immaculate. Jeans and a T-shirt, big bumper shoes, bermuda shorts – nothing is wasted, it's perfect. I hate fuss. I love things to be strong, clean, aggressive.'

How does one explain it? On paper this may sound a bit creepy. But when you meet him and he starts to unwind, it's difficult not to get involved. Such rage and immersion, one finds oneself dragged in, and alone, out of all the people I interviewed for this book, Gilbey made me understand why someone might really devote their whole life to making clothes.

Peter Golding, by comparison, is low-keyed. He is a bearded

and long-haired youth, extremely amiable, without Gilbey's fanaticism and without much of his strength.

Golding has been freelance since 1964 and, since then, he has designed ranges for the International Wool Secretariat, for Aertex and Dhobi Raincoats (he won an award for this last) and for many others, without ever quite becoming the major international name that he wishes to be. He has had real successes in England, Germany and America; the clincher, however, has so far eluded him.

His selling pitch has been what he calls Engineering for Soul, by which he means the wedding of high-fashion style to industrial technique. 'If modern industry was used properly, it could make clothes with more soul than ever before,' he says. 'So far it has only been used to make clothes at their worst. That's what I want to change, because mass-produced clothes are the only way that everyone can look beautiful. It must happen – industry must replace couture, just as the poster has replaced art. Savile Row is all very well but it belongs in the past and I'm not concerned with the past. I don't want to be Peter Golding, Tailor to the Stars; I want to be Peter Golding, Industrialist.'

As one might expect, the resultant designs are brash and uncomplex. Like Tom Gilbey, Golding dislikes clutter and avoids padding and linings and all unnecessary detail, anything not practical. His clothes aren't intimate, nor especially tactile, but they are brisk and clean, unobjectionable. What they lack is any great flair.

By contrast with both Gilbey and Golding, who are theorists, Edward Lloyd is totally unromantic. He is a Welshman, an intelligent and likeable man in his mid-forties, and he sees design, quite simply, as a job.

He didn't start designing until 1963, when he took charge of menswear at Jaeger, having worked his way up from salesman and, without preparation or training of any sort, began to turn out fashion. In that, he was the best possible example of what I was talking about earlier, the essential unreality of design as a male-fashion concept. Get down to it, the only reason that Lloyd was now a designer was because he and

Jaeger said so, and yet he proved excellent. He produced double-breasted blue serge suits, and knee-length lancer coats, buttoned up both sides of the chest, and for the eighteen months of his incumbence, Jaeger was very good indeed.

In 1965, he started his own consultancy and, since then, he has designed for Austin Reed, Courtaulds and Chester Barrie, and many others besides. He has been extremely successful. He has a subtle sense of colour, and of balance. Above all, he accepts his own limitations: 'I don't want to be terribly original. I just want to be professional. I don't care about causing revolutions; I care about taste.'

Perhaps because of this, manufacturers have tended to prefer him to younger, more anarchic designers. With Lloyd, at least they know he's realistic. 'The things I like myself never sell,' he says. 'I designed a safari suit nine months before anyone else brought it out but the manufacturers wouldn't use it. And from their point of view, they were right – the market wasn't ready.'

Most designers have tried desperately to get a break in America, where the real money lies, but Lloyd does well enough in England and rests content. 'In any case, American manufacturers are getting fed up,' he says. 'So many big-name designers have flopped over there, they've just about had enough. The international designer is a myth, anyhow – as far as I know, no designer has ever been really successful in more than one country. His name may sell internationally but, if it does, he isn't doing the work himself.

'The cult of the designer is coming to an end, I think. Manufacturers have come to the conclusion that the things designers believe in never really sell and they're right: nice things don't.'

If Lloyd is right, and I'm sure he is, bleak years lie ahead. Even as it is, English designers are having trouble in pulling down the really major deals, the kind of contract that launched Hardy Amies or Cardin. Sometimes they make money, or they survive, but they don't clean up. Even the best and most publicized, like Tom Gilbey, have not become names on a par with, say, Pierre Cardin or Cerutti and, with

every year that escaped them, their chances of a real breakthrough got less.

The reason is that, as the sixties have finished and their atmosphere of instant grooviness has faded, the industry has been waking up. Gradually, it has realized that, if it's ever going to solve its problems, it will have to find the answers itself. As long as managements remain flabby and out of date, no number of finger-snapping, toe-tapping students can help them. In the end, designers are only a delaying tactic and anyhow, as Edward Lloyd says, they always seem to lose the companies money.

The big firms have begun to rehaul themselves. At last, the manufacturers and giant retailers have started introducing fresh blood, with a view to revamping their business at every level. Over the next few years, they'll attempt to update everything – their sales techniques, their advertising and their image, their use of fabric and, also, their design.

Obviously, if this works, if the industry really rediscovers how to cope for itself, designers will become largely superfluous. There will still be room for the very best, the ones with real originality and real professionalism. But the age of the crushed-velvet jeans and the pentel is almost done.

18

Hippie, Part Two

Bit by bit, it became obvious that Flower Power had not worked. While it had lasted, it had felt beatific but, by the summer of 1968, one could not fail to notice that it had been quite ineffectual. Clearly, this business of everyone loving everyone else was going to take longer than one had first supposed.

Disconcerted, the Hip movement split into two distinct approaches: a minority turned into serious political activists; the great majority stopped trying altogether, gave up on spreading Love and got quietly stoned instead.

Most of the politicals were students or, in the case of their leaders, ex-students and they ranged themselves in various warring factions, Maoists bickering with Trotskyites, Yippies with orthodox Marxists. Despite the internal disagreements, however, an overall dress-style emerged and it went back past Flower Power and Psychedelia through the Beats to Bohemia and the thirties. Setting out for the demos of 1968, the New Left looked much like Anthony Powell's Erridge in the *Music of Time* sequence, off to the Spanish Civil War: '. . . a straggling beard and air of utter down-at-heelness.'

The basic uniform restricted itself to anoraks, T-shirts, dirtied-down sneakers or running shoes. Jeans were left unwashed until they could almost stand up unaided, beards and hair grew as tangled as darkest Orinoco. Anything more fancy was seen as a frivolity, effete and improper: a cop-out.

Non-political Hips didn't go quite that far but, even here, the costume had turned scruffy. The flamboyance and elaboration of Flower Power was replaced by a conscious sloppiness. Individual garments might still be wild; there were still lurid velvet trousers, patchwork boots, embroidered sheepskin

jackets; but the essential look was now one of worked-at trampishness, as it had been with Beat.

The reason for this was that dressing up, in itself, no longer carried any impact. It was increasingly adopted by the middle-class and middle-aged and, therefore, had become useless as a form of protest. Male fashion was no longer something strange. Admen might wear flower-patterned shirts and tight trousers; shop salesmen had hair all over their collars; Television Centre was filled with extravagances of every kind. Simply, outrage had become bourgeois.

What wasn't bourgeois was squalor. As with the Beats, the pretence of poverty became the Hippies' last refuge, the only way left in which they could proclaim their independence and so, as well as being anti-taste, they became anti-fashion. All effort was uncool, a hassle. If one made an attempt to look pretty, one was backsliding, because true beauty was not, could not be in one's trappings but only in oneself. Hence the vogue for walking up to cripples and the variously afflicted, and saying, with sincerity, 'like you're beautiful, man'.

What clothes there were came mostly from the Kensington Market, an offshoot of the Chelsea Antique Market but cheaper and scummier. One or two of the stalls, like Cockell & Johnson, had serious ambitions to style and wanted a future; but the vast majority were passing ships, each run by a couple of Heads, who would chug along for a few months and then get bored or go broke and quit. 'I mean, like we're not a shop, man,' one told me. 'We're just doing our thing, y'know, and like getting our heads together.'

They sold things like pre-faded Levis and tie-dyed T-shirts (the shirts knotted and then dipped in dye, thus producing patterns or, more often, a series of stains and blotches), and ethnicry, like ponchos, suede or buckskin fringes, embroidered handbags and, for women, peasant-girl long dresses. In 1970, inspired by the vogue for Country Rock, there was a move towards Country'n Western clothes: cowboy shirts, leather jeans, high boots worn outside the trousers.

As before, the ethnic styles were aimed principally at disguising the wearer's origins, their basic middle-classness, and

perhaps that explains why Hippie dress has always seemed so half-baked by comparison with the equivalent working-class cults. The latter, whether Teds or Rockers or Greasers, Mods or Skinheads, have always been an expression of a real situation and identity, while Hippie has been a charade, an imitation of an American imitation. Working-class uniform has said *I am;* Hippie has said *I wish I was.*

Inevitably, the camouflage has grown wearisome and, by 1970, it seemed that the movement was decaying. The Isle of Wight Pop Festival, a triumph in 1969, turned into fiasco; Jimi Hendrix, perhaps the movement's most crucial figurehead, died; the Underground was disillusioned, split into numberless sects, each accusing the others of selling out. It was time, more than time, for a change in style.

So it was, after ten years, that the graph of middle-class revolt was almost back where it had started from. In 1960, it had stood almost at nought; had then risen slowly through the emergence of Bob Dylan and the Stones, and the appearance of long hair and drugs; reached its peak with the summer of Flower Power; subsided gently through meditation and the first pop festivals; now it had almost completed itself.

Not quite, of course. Ten years ago, the Hip world had been tiny, just a few freaks and students; now it was a vast and sophisticated network, almost a private society, a large chunk of a whole generation.

Allowing for the difference in scale, though, the feeling was not dissimilar. As in 1960, there was the same sense of restlessness and uncertainty, of something needing to happen. 'Boil some water,' as Pat Hobby said. 'Lots of it.'

19
Kings Road

In the first place, fashion in the Kings Road was almost entirely female. Mary Quant had opened Bazaar in 1955 and, on her success, rivals sprang up in groups. The street became famous, and filled with frivolities of every kind, and tourists visited it from all around the world, just to sample its fol-de-rol treats; and all this time, there was only one men's shop that counted – John Michael. Clearly, there was a gap to be filled and, from the mid-sixties on, Carnaby Street began to move in.

Firms like Take Six and Mates and Stanley Adams decided to try moving up the market, to cater for the twenties as well as teenagers. 'The Kings Road?' said Irvine Sellars. 'A lot of pseudo-intellectuals, that's what they are; but they're spenders, I'll give them that.'

As newcomers, they were amply publicized. Just because Kings Road was so fashionable in other fields, it was assumed automatically that everything in it must be jet-set by definition, every boutique crammed to its portals with international Pepsis* of the first magnitude.

It wasn't true: the faces who gave the road its reputation, who overflowed the Arethusa and Alvaro's, and Quorum and Bazaar, didn't often buy men's clothes there. They shopped at Blades or Mr Fish, or in Paris or Rome but, with a couple of exceptions, the neighbourhood stores were dismissed out of hand.

Instead, Kings Road menswear drew most of its profits from tourists and trippers, seekers after instant Groove and, as such,

* My own phrase, derived from the advertisement 'It's The Real Thing Coke', which I have used as a covering name for the fashionable mock-Hip movement.

it became a jumped-up Carnaby Street, the middle-class version: more sophisticated, more expensive but scarcely more inspiring. It is true that it didn't go in for quite the same crudities; therefore, it was less disreputable and also less funny. Simply, it was dull.

Carnaby Street imports apart, there was also a string of Pop/Hippie shops, working largely for Rock groups and their hangers-on. On the whole, these were livelier, though less professional: Dandy, now defunct, where Jimi Hendrix bought much of his stagewear; Mr Freedom; Forbidden Fruit, berobed and befringed; and Granny Takes A Trip, perennial home of musicians about to tour America, famous or notorious for its velvet pants and its boots: 'London's home of motley garb,' said Pete Townshend.

Towards the end of the decade, however, most of them had run out of steam. Some closed down, some moved to other districts and some simply went out of favour. Meanwhile, the Kings Road as a whole was also starting to flag. Its restaurants and clubs, once so modish, were now thought to be passé and, by 1970, the centre had shifted towards the Fulham Road, which was cheaper and less tripper-infested.

Almost week by week, Fulham sprouted new treats: cafés and restaurants, antique shops and, of course, clothes stores – Dean Rogers and Piero di Monzi, Hollywood and Michael Chow's Universal Witness. None of them were very good but they were new and jazzy, and the fashion pages were full of them.

As for the Kings Road, it became more tourist-orientated than ever and most of its boutiques were derisory. Left behind in the wreckage, however, there was one good shop – Just Men – and it had been there all along.

It was started in 1964 by a South African ballet dancer called Charles Schuller, who had worked with John Michael and, essentially, it was John Michael updated – better than the original had ever been, quicker and more imaginative but aiming for roughly the same middle-class market: 'the adventurous man of taste', as Schuller puts it.

Its greatest strength was in its mimicry, in the way that it

achieved the look and feel of custom-made clothes at ready-made prices. In that sense, it was like the best fake jewellery, except that it often topped the originals, doing things better and twice as cheap as Blades or Mr Fish. For instance, it was the first shop with well-cut flared trousers; among the first with tapered shirts ('before us, a shirt was a tent with arms on'); and if not the first, almost the best with leather maxicoats, skinny Shetland sweaters, slimmed-down Donegal tweeds for trousers and suits.

It wasn't cheap exactly – it sold suits for around £40, trousers for £7 to £10 and coats for up to £80, which is high for off-the-peg. But most of the time, it was worth it. When you thought of some of the stuff at double the price, it would seem like a knock-down bargain.

In the last couple of years, it's gone off the boil a bit. Fashion itself being so ephemeral, few shops or designers can sustain at full blast more than five years and, on his own admission, Schuller has felt the pace. 'Everything seems harder now, it all takes much more effort.'

Even in decline, though, Just Men has great compensations. It still cuts the best trousers to be bought; it has a hair stylist, Gordon Ettles, who cuts twice as well and half as expensively as the Pepsi salons; it has also acquired a good bespoke tailor. It isn't what it used to be but it remains the best ready-made shop in London.

20

Michael Fish and After

Throughout all the ramifications of Hippie, there was a fashionable inner circle, who played out the movement's rituals but took none of its risks. Sunday-supplement Heads, they grew their hair long and wore fancy dress, went to *Hair* and *Easy Rider*. They smoked joints after dinner and adopted the Hip jargon. But they didn't leave home or get arrested or give all their money away. In short, the trick was to take the game just as far and no further than the point at which things began to get awkward; to strike the stance of revolution while preserving the status quo.

This was the Pepsi generation, the descendants of the Adlib aristocracy – musicians and actors and mediamen, models and photographers, finger-popping businessmen and toe-tapping peerage – and, throughout the late sixties, they were the heart of male high fashion. Wherever they shopped, fashion journalists clustered round and their readers came running behind.

By this time, most of the Adlib originals had dropped away. The Beatles had taken separate paths and retreated into seclusion; other heroes had died, gone to live in Los Angeles or been discredited. As for the dandies, they had become bored.

Michael Rainey shut down Hung On You. Mark Palmer, who had been running a model agency called English Boy, shut down as well and took off for the wilds in a gypsy caravan. Christopher Gibbs and David Mlinaric merely stopped trying.

The reasons were complex. Partly they had grown tired of being aped; partly it was disillusion with the way that the Hip movement was going; partly it was just growing up and its accoutrements: wives, families, commitments.

Besides, it was logical. If the first effect of Hippie had been to make dress freer, the second was to push the same thought further and reject dress, as a vanity, altogether: 'I finally tumbled that fashion was a fallen angel,' says Gibbs. 'A pernicious force to keep you running from yourself. We're torturing ourselves, aren't we, and what for? Tight pants are sexually damaging; almost everything that looks nice is constricting and unhealthy.'

As early as 1968, those most finely tuned to the waverings of fashion could have picked up the signals: elaborate fancy dress was about to become unchic. Very few did so, however, and, for the moment, the circuit carried on undiminished. In fact, it had a brand new leader, Michael Fish.

Fish was tall and gangling and loquacious, and came from Wood Green, describing his parents as 'very ordinary'. Having made such a splash at Turnbull & Asser, with his technorama shirts and kipper ties, he decided to go it alone and found financial backing from Barry Sainsbury, grandson of the grocer. In 1966, Mr Fish opened in Clifford Street.

On the label of all his garments, he printed the legend 'Peculiar to Mr Fish' and he took this, in its campness and calculated weirdery, as his text. Simply, he set out to be outrageous.

He succeeded. His shop was a holocaust of see-through voiles, brocades and spangles, and miniskirts for men, blinding silks, flower-printed hats. In fact it was a Pepsi equivalent to Kiss Me Quick. Nevertheless, it went down a storm.

This was Pepsi at its most definitive – all the surface mannerisms and mouthings of Hippie, but none of the intent. 'Oh, no,' says Barry Sainsbury now, a bit appalled at the thought. 'We didn't try to change the world. We just wanted to be chic.'

Like John Stephen, Fish was hardly a designer; he was a moment. He coincided perfectly with the first eruptions, grew up alongside UFO and Flower Power, and he caught the mood. It was a time when the young rich wished, above all, to be wild and exhibitionist and foolish, and he was all of these things in abundance. In no time, his clientele included

Terence Stamp and Mick Jagger, David Frost and Lord Snowdon and David Bailey, the Dukes of Bedford and Ellington.

Socially, he was a great success as well. He had charm, was funny and bitchy and emotional, and his customers took him up as something of a mascot, so that he was forever dining with politicians or Pop millionaires, or indulging in badinage with Princess Margaret. For two years, perhaps more than anyone else in London, he had what Pepsis themselves called Nowness: you could have shut him in a time machine, labelled him 1967 and our descendants would have known all.

In the *London Magazine*, he wrote an explanation and justification of his stance, under the title 'Doing Your Own Thing', and it summed up Pepsi exactly: 'People can be divided into doers of their own thing and non-doers of their own thing.'

At the beginning of this piece, he also wrote: 'I don't accept divisions of society into fashion and non-fashion. The people who come into my shop don't have to dress to conform to any given image. They dress as they do because they're confident in themselves. They're blowing their minds.'

Despite his prices of £100 a suit and up to £20 a shirt, this naiveté was not assumed. Having interviewed him at length, I'm fairly sure that he really believed it and, very likely, it was this innocence, this total unawareness of the motivations that he was dealing with, that let him come on with such brashness and blatancy and, therefore, be successful.

Within eighteen months, his turnover had gone up to £250,000 a year but it wasn't his money-making that was so impressive; it was the way in which, within months, he was accepted as an authority. *Women's Wear Daily* called him 'the arbiter of chic from London'; *Elle* called him, enigmatically, 'Fish-Fash'; and *The Times* called him 'the celebrated outfitter'.

The tabloids, meanwhile, were equally keen on him, because of his flair for gimmickry, the way he could always be relied on for a picture story whenever hard news was short. There was a period when you couldn't wake up with a hang-

over without being faced by Mr Fish in a minikilt, or Mr Fish in silver sequins.

Among the follies, he also found time to produce several styles that were fashionable at other levels, and were taken up by Carnaby Street or the Kings Road or even, on occasion, by the High Street: roll-necked silk shirts, which had a year of vogue at every level from couture to Marks & Spencer; kipper ties, of course; and leather maxicoats, first designed for him by Eric Joy, so Joy says, in November 1966.

Personally, he was a mixture of extroversion and insecurity, folly and shrewdness, campery and solemnity. 'I have tried to break down the frontiers of man,' he told me. 'Do I care about the masses? Jesus Christ had only twelve disciples and one of them was doubting Thomas.'

These apparent non sequiturs cropped up at regular intervals in his pronouncements, giving conversation a slightly hallucinatory flavour. When I asked him what influence he'd had, for instance, he thought it over and said, cagily: 'What do you call a negro with a spear? Sir? Of course you do.

'I am a typical Taurean, which means that I'm an ardent lover and firm friend but the deadliest of enemies. I can be very sweet, though, at times.

'I'm very shy. Most extroverts are shy. I would rather have people laugh at me and walk past me than have them confront me seriously. Mind you, if I don't get whistled at and jeered when I pass a New York building site, I feel underdressed. Four years ago, I thought that success was being mentioned in the gossip columns of the *Daily Sketch*. Now I'm much deeper. Every time I get in a plane, I smile and I go on smiling all through the flight and I know that I'll smile even if I crash, because I'm convinced that I'll be able to lift my spirit from my body. I believe that there's a common spirit linking everyone.

'I don't care about taste. I think taste is a word like love; it should be forgotten for fifty years. I don't even know what it means. Actually, I always think I'm very vulgar. Revolutionaries have to be.'

As it happened, Fish was not as revolutionary as he him-

self thought, nor as the press claimed for him. He was a continuation of Fun Clothes, in a line from Hung On You and he did start a few new styles but he changed nothing basic, he wasn't a watershed, like Rainey or John Stephen or even Cecil Gee. He was a maker of fashionable jokes, and an all-round family entertainer.

As for Barry Sainsbury, he was also entertaining, largely as a human barometer of what was In and Out. When he went into partnership with Fish, he was in his late thirties and had spent his last twenty years in almost continuous perambulation from St Moritz to St Tropez to Positano, from Paris to London to New York to Rome, until there was no wrinkle or crevice of modishness that escaped him. His most treasured word was *démodé*.

He was fascinating: the art of the chameleon might not be dramatic but it was rare, ambiguous, unlearnable and Sainsbury possessed its gifts in high degree. He had the quality of a glossy magazine, an advertisement for Peter Stuyvesant or Cinzano – a year-round tan, a fluoride gleam and utter composure, even when saying, of Yves St Laurent's safari suits: 'I love them. Or let's say I loved them in the past. To be honest, they're a bit *démodé* now.'

So it was that he and Michael Fish should be joined in 1966; so it was, equally, that they should be parted in 1969.

Mr Fish was not the only chic Hip shop, merely the first among many. Fancy dress also flourished in the Pop emporiums of the Kings Road, like Dandy and Granny Takes A Trip, which I will deal with in my next chapter; in Blades, during its Fab Fun fashion phase, and at specialist stores, shoe shops like the Chelsea Cobbler and shirt-makers like Major Arcana; and through David Elliott, a youth of most frightening precociousness, who started by working for Fish and then left to set up on his own, successfully, when he passed his nineteenth birthday.

But the most impressive of all Pepsi undertakings was Deborah & Claire, a shirt shop in Beauchamp Place, which showed more flair and invention than any chic/Hip shop since Hung On You. Each of its shirts was made from start to finish

by the same girl and the result was that they really fitted and wore. Also, they were as strong on texture and balance as on impact; provided pleasures that lasted. At up to £10 ready-made and £30 custom-made, nothing was given away. But the cost was usually justified, both aesthetically and in workmanship.

However, the chic/Hip style was best defined not by Deborah & Claire, nor by any shop, but by a series of new hairdressing salons, aimed specifically at the long-haired rich. For upwards of £2 a time, these washed you in lemon and herbal lotions, fed you coffee, smashed you with megadecibel Rock and, meanwhile, cut hair rather badly. When you emerged, you looked marvellous, just like a fashion plate, all hand-dried and curled; but when you reached the corner, you were caught by a gust of wind and the whole ornate edifice would disintegrate about you, leaving you raddled as before.

But even if they *had* cut well, they'd still have been perverse. Long hair, after all, had been meant as a Fuck You, adopted in anger and revulsion against established order; now the salons castrated it – stripped it of rage and left it prettified, prim.

The first and most celebrated of these salons ('clip joints', as the press called them, heaving with hilarity) was a basement called Sweeneys, in Beauchamp Place, which was later augmented by Todds, a second branch in Worlds End.

They were both run by Gary Craze, an ex-ladies' hairdresser who combined the obligatory do-your-own-Hippie jargon with an oddly showbiz style, reminiscent of Mamie Van Doren and Jayne Mansfield: 'Nik, I make very little money, and I mean that sincerely.'

He was articulate and self-confident, and he was spoken of most highly, largely by himself: 'Before I opened Sweeneys, in 1967, I worked for all the top ladies' salons,' he told me. 'But I'm not giving them credit any more. I was incredibly successful. I worked freelance and I had a huge clientele, who adored me and followed me everywhere.

'At Sweeneys, I was the first person ever to give hair a total

look, not just an isolated thing, stuck on top of your head, but part of the whole effect of your body. I don't even mean with clothes on – I cut to the naked body, because that's the time when it's important to look good, when you're doing a scene with someone. Sexually, I mean.

'A lot of top faces come to me but I don't give names, that's not my bag. I could reel off a list that's unbelievable, pop stars and film stars and almost anyone you could mention, but I despise all that. I loathe vulgarity. I think I have a certain humble kind of chic and chic is something rather special.

'Nik, will you do me a favour? When you write this, will you give the date of our interview? Because in six months my thinking may be completely different, according to where my head is at. But on August 1st, 1970, I am trying to purify and simplify my look. I'm not a gimmicky person. I hate all this obsession with appearance. In the end, I hope to become totally pure.'

During 1969-70, this phase began at last to run down. Just as Hippie was losing its novelty at mass level, so it seemed exhausted as high fashion and taste turned away from kaftans and love beads. During the summer of 1969, there was a last flurry of couture buckskin fringes and flowered shirts; thereafter, psychedelia became definitely unsmart.

In this period, also, male fashion was diversifying and splintering and, for the first time, it was getting difficult to say exactly what was modish and what wasn't. When Hippie faded, no single replacement emerged and fashion broke into several different strands: fun clothes; the junk-shop and ethnic stragglings of the Kensington Market; a revival in waistcoated formality; and a vogue for French styles and for continental designers in general, especially Cerutti and Yves St Laurent.

What this signalled was an end to dictatorship. Ever since Brummell, style had been determined by an elite and the general public had tagged along. The leaders themselves had changed but, whether they were Brummell or Edward VII or Mick Jagger, their influence had been all-powerful. Now it wasn't. Sometimes new fashions would originate from cele-

brities but, more often, they started on the street, born of no one in particular.

This was the process started by the Teds and it had survived in teenage cults – Mods, Rockers, Skinheads – ever since; but it hadn't previously affected high fashion. Now it took over. Little shops would spring up, start a few new looks and then fade out again; men began to design for themselves and have the garments made up by their girlfriends; different influences and directions cropped up everywhere.

By the end of 1970, no focal point remained. 'Fashion hardly exists any more,' said Michael Fish, 'only clothes.'

This was gross over-simplification but there was a glimmer of truth behind it. Certainly, it was no longer possible for Savile Row, or even Carnaby Street, to impose a single overall look on the markets. More and more designers were thinking for themselves and the result, inevitably, was that fashion increased dramatically in range and variety.

The fancy-dress cult survived in fun clothes, centred on a shop called Mr Freedom, which opened in Worlds End in 1969 and then moved to Kensington at Christmas 1970, where it lived in a giant Palace of Fun and was crammed perpetually with Pepsi superstars, names truly worth dropping, like Joe Massot.

It was run by an amiable fatman called Tommy Roberts, who was twenty-eight and derived from Catford. In his time, he had been a used-car salesman, a 'layabout beatnik' and co-partner in Kleptomania. Now he was a bit of a slag, consciously so, in a stained T-shirt with sweat marks under the pits, but he was shrewd, funny, and hard to dislike.

His clothes were meant to be laughed at. Their first concept was to take children's clothes, especially American ones, and camp them up for adults. So there were multi-coloured T-shirts, with slogans printed on them, and short shorts, dungarees or floppy caps, and these were then mixed in with pastiches of Hollywood in the thirties and, above all, in the fifties.

Everything came in primary colours, the louder the better, and there were appliqués – transfers, more or less – printed

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on the front or back, of Elvis Presley or Jean Harlow or Mickey Mouse, nursery-rhyme landscapes, aeroplanes or cadillacs, whatever happened to be Kitsch of the Month.

They pretended to jollity; in practice, their effect was exactly opposite. They carried no real love for or revelry in the images pastiched, only patronization. They took no delight but sniggered: self-conscious, effete, essentially joyless.

Nevertheless, there were many who found them simply spiffing. In a moment when the beads and robes of Hippie had begun to seem tiresome, Fun Clothes provided a brand new game, infinite in its potential for camp and vacuity: *let us now pretend that we are Freddie Bartholomew.*

Not only was the shop overflowing every time you passed but there was a second shop in Toronto and a thriving wholesale business, selling Fun to other boutiques: 'And that's just in eighteen months,' said Roberts. 'Wait till we really get going.'

He sold about forty per cent to men, sixty to women and his schemes were infinite. He planned Mr Freedom cosmetics, jewellery and stockings, wallpaper and baseball boots, plus a takeover of European and American markets, and then what else? Cars, apartment blocks, whole cities: 'The possibilities are endless. You can use the basic principle on anything, like you could have a whole street in primary colours, or appliqués on trains or jets.

'Fun Clothes can be incredibly important. After all, when automation takes over, work will slacken off and everything will be leisure. It'll be a whole Fun life then.'

Actually, the concept of Fun hadn't begun with Roberts but with Jim O'Connor, who had been a student at the RCA and, during the college's 1968 fashion show, had woken everyone up with an Elvis Presley gold lamé suit, and a voluminous flyer's greatcoat, complete with little aeroplanes on each shoulder.

Having graduated, O'Connor was freelance for a time and then joined David Elliott, in 1970, when the latter opened a new shop in Shepherds Market. Together, they sold little canvas jackets with trees or faces embroidered on the back (£40) and shiny silk suits (£80) and sequined dressing gowns

(£200). 'It won't last,' said Elliott. 'But it's nice while it does.'

Elliott was right: when Mr Freedom moved to Kensington, O'Connor joined him as chief designer. Already, Roberts had been outscoring Elliott in the Fun stakes and this gave him a virtual monopoly.

All the time, he kept changing. Even while the kids' clothes look was still going strong, he began to fade it and plumped flat-out for the fifties. He reintroduced Teddy Boy suits, atrociously made but still recognizable and, for women, tight high school sweaters and full skirts. One could see how this might go on indefinitely, until none of Hollywood or Pop mythology remained to be raped. 'Even then, I'm not bothered,' said Roberts. 'By that time, we could do a camp revival of Flower Power or even ourselves, when we began; we could go round in circles forever.

'I firmly believe that this isn't just a fad or fashion. It's a complete revolution, which will last for ten years at least and change clothes completely. In fact, clothes only really change every hundred and fifty years or so – we're just finishing one cycle, which was Serious, and this is the beginning of the next, which will be Fun.'

I don't think he's right, or at least not in these terms. One cycle may be ending but I don't see Mr Freedom as a new dawning. Rather, I see it as an ending, the death-rattle of Swinging London, and in two years, no doubt, it will have passed along, become as distant as Psychedelia or any other Pop cult.

For the moment, though, Fun reigns supreme – it fills magazines and posters, is reflected in the mirrors of a hundred discotheques and restaurants. At middle-aged joint-smoking parties, balding fatties come on as Johnny Weismuller and their wives play Rita Hayworth.

It is not a pretty sight. 'Makes you sick, and it's typical,' says Eric Joy. 'At the beginning of empires, when a nation is healthy, no one can be bothered with fashion as such, they're much too busy; but when empires crack up, like the decline and fall of Rome, you get sartorial splendour, homosexuality, the equivalents of drug addiction and Mickey Mouse T-shirts.'

These are the clothes that appear most in the press; but they are against the prevailing current. On the whole, the golden age of fancy dress seems to have passed and the general movement is back towards calm. Just like Carnaby Street and the rank-and-file Hippies, Pepsis have been a bit surfeited with outrage. After five years of continual crescendo, they're wearied.

Ballyhoo continues regardless. Stunts and follies come as fast as ever and many people still fall for them. But veterans, those who have lived through the whole sixties saga, are unimpressed. Beneath the hysteria, they can see that times have changed. During the early and middle sixties, for all their exaggerations, there was a bumper crop of Pop talent in every field; but the machine requires fresh flesh continually and supplies have now run out. In 1970, there were no new Beatles or Rolling Stones, no Mary Quants or David Hockneys or Ossie Clarks, no Michael Raineys. The centre was shifting away from London and setting up in Los Angeles and New York and Rome.

That is where the continental designers came in and Barry Sainsbury was now acquiring his knitted pants and his shoes from Cerutti in Paris; his suits from Palazzi in Rome ('Absolutely, but absolutely, the only man who knows about gaberdine'); his beachwear and 'the most marvellously cut jeans' from St Tropez.

Other droppable names were Valentino and Piatelli in Rome, and Yves St Laurent in Paris and, by comparison with Michael Fish and the rowdiness of the English designers, they were muted. St Laurent was an exception but the rest avoided skin-tightness and clashing colour, and were contemptuous of Fun. Instead, they were concerned with subtleties of fabric and style, and with making money, because you couldn't sneeze round any of them for less than £100.

The best of them, like Cerutti and Valentino, were undeniably elegant; the worst, like St Laurent, merely snob. But all of them, good or bad, tended towards bloodlessness – a bit precious, and emasculate. 'Poufs,' said Eric Joy, succint as ever, and one did not wish to argue.

But they fitted the moment. As the bombulations of the sixties began to die down, they provided just the right neatness and understatement: safari suits; small-collared bodyshirts, tight knitted sweaters, shoes rather than boots, check maxicoats. 'Being too much of a natty dresser is definitely passé,' said Sainsbury. 'Three years ago, I used to walk down the street in absolutely anything, a frilly shirt or satin trousers, and love it. Now I would find it old-fashioned and embarrassing.'

By 1970, the old words began to creep back, like taste and balance and even, unimaginably, quality. Already, it had become fashionable to speak of Sixties People, meaning flag-waving Swinging Londoners, as though they belonged in another age, like silent film stars: melodramatic and comic though not without a quaint lovability.

As far as actual shops were concerned, the continental vogue had helped the French more than the Italians. As early as 1967, Browns in South Molton Street had been selling French styles, and low-rise, straight-cut New Man jeans in particular; but they had since changed management and policy, and the field had been left largely to Piero di Monzi, in the Fulham Road, Browns, and Feathers, – the last two now under the same management.

By 1970, the pace was picking up fast. Yves St Laurent opened a Rive Gauche boutique in Knightsbridge, and there was a Cerutti boutique at Harrods, and Palazzi department at Jaegers, and New Man jeans were stocked by almost everyone. Suddenly, every second shop seemed to be European.

A transitory but much publicized fad, meanwhile, was Unisex, which was based on the perception that the division between male and female dress had largely disappeared. Men were wearing more and more silks and satins; women more and more trousers and shirts and clumpy shoes. Apparently, styles had become interchangeable.

In itself, this was true enough: costumes *were* overlapping, in reflection of a relaxation in sexual identity. Just as male fashion had been born out of the willingness of men to accept at last what was feminine in their own make-up, so women

were less tied down as well, able both to use their own masculine facets and to accommodate the increased effeminacy of their boy friends.

Clearly, this would increase still further. As women became more liberated and more career-minded, and as men cared less about dominance, their roles would become very ambiguous indeed and, as such, would have a profound effect on their dress.

Unisex ignored this. Blundering past the real implications, it saw only an opportunity for a gimmick, a short-term stunt. Male and female models were photographed in identical outfits, with the idea that all lovers would be enthralled and wish to look like twins. His and Hers swimsuits, pyjamas and shirts, hairstyles, underwear and T-shirts, until the whole nation would turn into the Dolly Sisters: without doubt, it was a cutesy concept and, for months, the trade and the press plugged it like mad. Luckily, nobody much bought it.

What *was* real, however, was that increasing numbers of boutiques began to cater for both men and women. This wasn't Unisex, because the garments weren't all identical, regardless of sex; but they were sold together, and one more barrier was removed. Within ten years, at least in high fashion, it was conceivable that no more men's shops, per se, would exist.

And Michael Fish? In 1970, he still got his name in the papers and his shop was still full, and would continue to be so for a couple more years. But he wasn't ecstatic. Even at the best of time, not being a businessman, he had lost money; now he had split with Sainsbury and the moment, somehow, had passed. He said that he was tired of pressures and hassles. 'The higher you get,' he told me, 'the fewer there are around you.'

It is true that he seemed wearied. He still expected to go wholesale and to achieve a deal with one of the multiples, as Hardy Amies had done. Even if that failed, he could always sell out at a handsome profit. Even so, there was a sense of anti-climax. 'Poor dear Michael,' said Barry Sainsbury. 'It sounds unkind to say, but I find him terribly *démodé*.'

21

Skinheads

As I have described, Mod did not hold on to its original delicacy but evolved gradually into straight workaday thuggery and, by 1966, it had become diametrically opposed to everything that it had first stood for.

After the end of the seaside riots, it ceased to be a major national movement; but it survived in pockets, mostly in the South, and had a certain strength in dance halls. Instead of the Pop Art strangenesses of the Who, Mods now supported the Soul bands, particularly Geno Washington and his Ram Jam Band, at whose every gig they would descend in force and proceed to raise hell. Sometimes they just leaped about and yelled; sometimes they tore the place apart. In any case, they had become almost throwbacks, as basic and as violent as the Teds, and they were deliberately yobbish, hated pretensions or graces in any form.

All of this has to be set against the background of Flower Power, the middle-class cult of the time. Then one can see that Mod had become a backlash, a working-class reaction against a softness that it didn't understand and didn't trust, thinking it queer. Instinctively, when confronted by Hippie, it thought it was being mocked.

Most Mods of this period were around seventeen or eighteen and had shortish hair and functional clothes, though without going to extremes. During 1968, however, a new generation began to emerge behind them, three or four years younger, who took the same basic attitudes but hardened them into fetishes.

The name Skinhead wasn't used at first. To begin with, they just seemed like infant Mods, though more ferocious, and were left unlabelled. In North Finchley, especially, they were

murderous and that, as far as I know, was where short-cropped hair and heavy boots first came in.

Where the older Mods felt only a general aggression, the new crop produced a credo, very succinct: *we hate flash.*

By flash, they meant almost anything more complex than a kick in the teeth. Hippies were flash, of course, and intellectuals and successes; articulacy was flash; status symbols of any kind, whether pretty girlfriends or cars or fancy clothes; physical beauty, or eccentricity, or a concern with taste; image.

What wasn't flash? Football on a Saturday afternoon, violence, Reggae (West Indian Pop) and the word Fuck – that was about the lot. Anything further was heresy, punishable with the boot.

Gradually, a uniform took shape, involving crewcuts and bovver boots, ankle-short trousers, braces and open-necked shirts. In its origins, this came from the American campus look – bumpers, denims, check shirts – but its effect, when you turned up an alley and were suddenly faced by it, the shaven skulls and the acne, and the boots like dodgem cars, was very different: stark and extremely scary, especially when they came up close and you saw that they were children, thirteen or fourteen years old.

Aesthetically, it was brilliant. 'Such simplicity,' says Tom Gilbey. 'A perfect, classic look; no fuss, no mess; just pure impact.' But the Skinheads themselves weren't concerned with that. To them, it was anti-dress, a deliberate crudeness and unglamour, saying 'We don't care, we aren't flash, we can't be tamed.'

Various names were tried in turn – Smithies, or Skulls, or Peanuts – and it wasn't until 1969 that Skinhead was accepted universally. By that time, the movement had spread nationwide and its trappings – the football riots, the beatings-up of Pakistanis, the bank holiday seaside eruptions – had been taken up by the media.

Meanwhile, as a counterblast, there was a revival in the Ted/Ton-up/Rocker tradition. Hurriedly, motorbikes were refurbished and hair oils unglued, black leather jackets

brought down from attics and handed over, reverently, to a new generation: the Greasers.

Greasers were more ornate even than the Rockers had been. Chains hung off them in festoons, their leathers were spectacularly bestudded and they called themselves Night Hawks or Hell's Angels or Midnight Marauders, in direct imitation of California. But beneath the embellishments, they were the same old stuff as ever, Teds all over again. They liked Jerry Lee Lewis, transport cafés and chips, breasts and punch-ups. When they clashed with the Skinheads, it was the Mods and Rockers exactly, five years further on.

Skinheads didn't change. Having set their style they stuck to it, except that old work-shirts replaced the check shirts and the boots grew even larger. As time went by, they began to lose a bit of their novelty and fearsomeness. By late 1970, they were familiar enough, and cosy enough, to be ripe for turning into fashion.

Yet again, the process commenced, the softening up. Forever first, Christopher Gibbs had cropped his hair for Christmas 1969 and others followed him, both male and female, including John Lennon.

Soon clothes designers followed the same lines. Shoe shops began to sell big round-toed, clumpy shoes; Jim O'Connor did campus styles and the results looked very much like the Shed or the Stretford End, three o'clock on a home-match Saturday, except at £30 or £40 or £50 a time; and Tom Gilbey's next direction, so he said, would be a Bovver Look.

None of these were true Skinhead clothes but the influence was there, close enough to hurt and the movement began to wind down. Like all their ancestors, the Skins were losing heart. They were growing older; they were shedding identity. Opening the evening paper and seeing themselves cartooned on the fashion page, their slogans mimed by pretty boys from Chelsea, they could only gnash and wail, crying 'Fie for Shame'.

By the autumn of 1970, they had already passed their peak. They were disappearing from football grounds and, jettisoning their boots and braces, they were letting their hair grow

out. By now, they'd reached their mid-teens and were called Suedes (Suedeheads) or Hairies.* In suits and ties, they were dapper and unalarming, although their social attitudes remained reactionary; on first glance, they looked like reincarnations of Shepherds Bush Mods, circa 1965.

But even if the Skinheads themselves have been fading, I think that their mood will survive. They have only been the teenage slice of a reaction that has been growing throughout the working class, the same right-wing surge that has produced Powellism and if, as seems likely, this is going to be a continuing and intensifying force throughout the seventies, then we're in for a whole series of Skinheadesque cults, recurring at three or four year intervals. The names would be changed, the boots and braces replaced by fresh props; the point would be the same: gangs, uniforms, pain.

* The last months have also seen the growth of a new movement, the Crombies. These are Skinhead-derived in habits and attitudes but, instead of boots and braces, their uniform is based upon half-length overcoats, clumsy shoes and check shirts. In theory, the coats should be made by Crombie, a long-established manufacturer but, in fact, since real Crombies are expensive, they usually aren't.

22

Retrenchment

One of the truisms of breakthrough, whether in fashion or in general social climate, is that it's almost impossible to move direct from A to B. If the breach is to be made at all, it takes excess to achieve it. It cannot be done by logic, or calm calculation; it can only be done by an advance-guard jumping blind and landing straightaway at C.

Having got that far, there can then be readjustment. Some of those at C may press on still further, to D, but the majority are likely to relax or grow tired and slide back a bit. Meanwhile, many of those who were too nervous to jump in the first place will have been reassured and begun to move forward as well. In the end, there may be a meshing round about B.

Clearly, that is great simplification, a kind of revolution by numbers but, in essence, it seems to me to express what has happened to men's clothes in the sixties and what is happening now. Beyond clothes, it may also express what has happened and is happening to Pop culture as a whole.

By any standards, the last decade has been a period of quite terrific upheaval at every level of the fashion market, and most of the changes that have been made have been basic and irreversible. To make these changes, however, it has been necessary to do a great deal of overblowing of fancy dress. As the seventies have begun, this is starting to seem redundant.

I have already described the signs of surfeit in high fashion, among the Hippies and in Carnaby Street, and the same sense of satiation has been emerging throughout fashion. 'The sixties were great but too much,' says Tom Gilbey. 'Now there's going to be a bit more thought, and standards.'

The changeover will not be total. As I've said, a minority will always push on to D and, no doubt, Pepsi will survive, birds of paradise fluttering up and down the Kings Road, and drag will still sell to Rock stars and their fans, and to the trendy middle-aged. When Mr Freedom and Fun are done with, some fresh folly will replace them, more camp and more garish than ever. Unless England is gripped by some overwhelming social disaster, and the idle rich are wiped out, it's hard to see how the cavalcade will ever stop.

But overall, it does seem that the drift is the other way. Teenagers have started wearing suits again, and shirts with ties, and polished shoes. In offices and in underground trains and on the street corners, there are kids in waistcoats.

The revival of the waistcoat, the most central symbol of retrenchment, has been largely the responsibility of Jeffrey Kwintner, who shows signs of becoming the most influential Pop shopkeeper since John Stephen.

Kwintner owns eight shops in London, four of them in the Kings Road, of which four are called the Squire Shop, three the Village Gate and one Thackeray. He wasn't actually the first to bring back waistcoats – the revival had begun on the Continent, and most of the early three-piece suits, around 1968, were Dutch imports; he wasn't even the first to sell them in London; but he was the first to push them and plug them flat-out, and it was he who made them catch on.

By the standards of his rivals, he was an oddity, because he was intellectual. Born in Hackney, son of a tailor, he'd grown up introspective and had gone to the Polytechnic, in Regent Street, to take a B.Sc. in Chemistry, when he began to read Jack Kerouac and *The Outsider* and went severely Beat.

He lived it fully. He washed dishes at Butlins, read Chinese poetry and bummed round Europe, studying Zen Buddhism. After a bit, as the novelty wore off, he set up a stall in Petticoat Lane. Then, five years ago, he opened his first boutique, the Ivy Shop, in Richmond; now his turnover is £1½ million.

This was not a usual background for menswear, not for someone in competition with Warren Gold or Irvine Sellars

and, compared to them, Kwintner seemed like a prodigy. Obviously, he must have been tough, or he wouldn't have been so rich; still, in his personal dealings, he was hypersensitive. He was obsessed by his relations with his employees, by their opinion of him and by his competitors' opinion of him and even by my own opinion of him: 'Would you say? Well, would you say I sold nice things?' he said, looking desperate; and, halfway through our interview, his wife rang him up, just to see how he was making out.

He cared about more than profit. When he started to talk about his business, he alternated great reams of theory and schemes with flashes of distrust. 'Why should I reveal my innermost thoughts to you?' he said. 'You're only dabbling, you're not involved: how could you understand?'

For these reasons, I found him intriguing and likeable. He had flashes of true fanaticism, and real imagination. 'Tell me something,' he said, 'how far do you think I can go?' Very far, I thought.

In Richmond, he had sold mock-Americana, in imitation of Ivy League, and his custom was mostly latter-day Mod. Even when he moved to Chelsea, in 1967, he continued to work the same styles and they made him a decent profit but caused no great excitements.

Two years ago, however, he began to ease out the campus look and replace it with the Olde Worlde English Gentleman. He saw that Carnaby Street drag must begin to lose speed soon, that outrage could not sustain indefinitely. Before anyone else, he realized that the sixties were not a new age dawning but a decade like any other, a certain mood, bound to pass.

So he started a reaction. He filled his windows with suits, not silks, but tweeds and wools, in quiet colours, and he gave them all waistcoats. They weren't pre-sixties in cut, being slim and long-jacketed, but they had an unPop calm and elegance, and they were cheap, from £25 to £30. Altogether, they carried a sense of past and Kwintner's shops were called The Squire or Thackeray, decorated with fake Tudor timbering. The mood was one of severe decorum: 'I think it's nice to have nice shops and sell nice things in a very nice way,'

Kwintner said, and he set an atmosphere that was picked up by Carnaby Street, by the big-store boutiques like Way In and Cue, and by out-of-town boutiques as well. Everyone began to backpedal.

In the terms of my first two paragraphs, this was the re-adjustment of the avant-garde, from C towards B; and, at the same time, the mass move forward from A was also developing. While fashion was calming down, ordinary clothes were beginning to speed up. By 1970, the big retailers and manufacturers were finally awakening and, every time that you opened a trade magazine, it seemed as though another firm had called in fresh talent to shake things up a bit. Above all, Montague Burton, who remained the biggest unit of all, selling twenty-five per cent of all suits retailed in England, two million suits a year for a turnover of around £50 million in five hundred and ten branches, had jumped in with a vengeance. They had recruited a group of new, youngish executives and were preparing to tackle all their problems: the use of synthetics, the escalation of ready-mades at the expense of made-to-measure, the increase in Casualwear. Blueprints had been prepared for the year 2000 and, within a year or two, apparently, Burtons' shops would start to change, both in image and content. The fashion market would be tackled, and the young, who were now shopping elsewhere, would be courted assiduously. 'We won't ever lead fashion,' said Peter Gorb, the group's new commercial director, 'but we're going to follow much closer behind.'

It was a major development. If Burtons moved, their competitors were bound to follow and therefore, during the seventies, the chances were that Englishmen would at last be given suits that fitted, and clothes that were shaped like their bodies.

Already, there were changes. Without even being fully aware of it, men of all ages and classes had begun to take more interest in their appearance. For the first time, they noticed and weren't abashed.

They had not woken up one morning and thought *Gosh, yes, I will be a peacock*; but gradually, almost subliminally, they'd

come around. They went to their offices in patterned ties; they bought trousers that didn't hang in elephantine folds; they wore their hair, according to a barber I spoke to, about an inch longer. They were trying. How many of them? About half, said the manager of my local Burtons and, more significant still, younger men seemed to be taking effort almost for granted.

Of course, it was all very English – no sudden realizations, no hysteria, no revolutions – and hardly dramatic. But one clerk in a coloured shirt meant more, and conveyed a deeper shift in national attitude, than all of Carnaby Street and the Kings Road put together.

23
Savile Row Now

By the start of the seventies, Savile Row had settled down a bit. Most of the companies that were going to go bust had already done so; those that survived might last indefinitely. The tailors no longer made fashion, nor had the least authority, but they had kept their American tourist trade and, latterly, a few of the English rich, bored at last with amusing Pepsi conceits that half-castrated you or fell apart as you wore them, had begun to drift back as well. As yet, they weren't enough to make much difference; they were an encouraging sign, however, and morale was good. 'Savile Row will still be here,' one tailor told me,' when Carnaby Street has been turned into a car park.'

The Pop invasion, meanwhile, continued to grow. Blades remained, of course; Mr Fish was just around the corner, and there were Eric Joy and Peter Golding and several others. Among the newcomers, the latest was Tommy Nutter, currently the most fashionable tailor in town.

He was twenty-seven, a comely youth from Edgware, and what made him intriguing was that he'd set up shop with no qualifications of any kind, beyond the sweetness of his smile. He had never been a designer, a tailor or a cutter, and he hadn't been a businessman; in fact, he had no previous success of any kind. Until the last year, he had been only a salesman in Burlington Arcade, without influence or capital. But he had made contacts and learned to be ambitious, and suddenly Cilla Black and Peter Brown, of Apple, backed him in Savile Row, with a starting price of £95 a suit.

He himself offered no explanations. When you asked him about it, he merely smiled and looked bashful. 'I don't know, I can't say why they did it,' he murmured. 'They trusted me,

they thought I might be successful. I suppose they liked me.' Charm, and a soft smile: it wasn't much to charge £95 for but it typified the way that high fashion now worked. Traditional trainings – experience, skill, professionalism – were useless, if not actively a disadvantage; grooviness was all it took.

Ironically, Nutters turned out excellent. It didn't have to be, because its customers cared for little but modishness, but it did. Down in the work rooms, there were first-rate cutters and they made three-piece suits of genuine elegance, long in the waist and wide in the lapel, full of movement.

Still, in the essence of bespoke tailoring, the actual clothes were secondary. What mattered most was the ritual and it was in this, in their timelessness and measure, that the best among the older-established firms so far outstripped Tommy Nutter and his ilk.

The Savile Row tradition had begun to take on value again. Ten years before, when it had still dictated fashion and kept menswear at a standstill, it had been despised: pompous and hidebound, a deathmask. But now that its power was gone, it seemed more romantic. In that, it was like some deposed Slavic princeling, once despotic but now made humble, reduced to chauffeur or cinema commissionaire. Toothless, it had become picturesque, a survivor from another age, and, as such, to be cherished like Lords or the wind-up gramophone. 'People used to come to us because their fathers had done so,' said Edward Packer, chairman at Huntsmans. 'Now they make a more conscious decision – they see us almost symbolically.'

It would be pointless to describe firms one by one, because it was the profession as a whole that mattered. But among the best and/or most powerful were Huntsmans in Savile Row, Billings & Edmonds in Hanover Square, and Kilgour French & Stanbury in Dover Street.

The chairman at Kilgour French was Louis Stanbury, a Hungarian, who had spent eighteen years as a tailor in Paris, won the Legion d'Honneur in the Resistance and come to London after the war. Over the years, he'd become something

of a Savile Row spokesman, often making pronouncements through the Men's Fashion Council.

He is sixty now, with a small moustache, a thimble in his pocket and still a strong Hungarian accent, and he's a talker in the Hyman Kaplan tradition – garrulous and rambling but visionary, often a man inspired.

In particular, he conveys most splendidly the tailor's task: 'My belief is in the he-man,' he says. 'Every man over forty wants to look like a retired colonel and it is for me to make the little, stomachy, bald-headed man into an Adonis. His wife is younger than him, you see. She married him for his money but he doesn't know that. He wants to look like Ronald Colman but his wife makes love to the gardener.

'The little, stomachy, bald-headed man wears an old tweed jacket, baggy and with patches on the elbows, so his wife says to him *You are a little, stomachy, balded-head man.*

'So he comes to me and I must make him masculine. It is not easy but I must. So I make him a beautiful suit and he looks like Ronald Colman. Then he buys champagne and flowers. His wife is lying in bed with the negligée. He throws open the door and stands inside, in his beautiful new suit. At last, his wife is happy: *Oh,* she says, *you are the champion*!'

Outside Stanbury's office, the walls are hung with pattern bags, on which exotic names are printed. Adnan Khashocci; Prince Amyn Aga Khan; Duke Gaetano Carcaci, his excellency Kamal Adham, and the Crown Prince of Japan; the Vicomte Guy de Jonche and Geraldo. 'Many of these Savile Row firms are idiots,' Stanbury says. 'They don't change, so they go bust. Every day they go to the bar and don't come back until three. Then they won't give the customer what he wants. They stick to the same old ways and talk about traditions. If you want to know the truth, they're just bone-lazy.

'And such a stupid remark, *what was good enough for my father is good enough for me.* In Hungary, my grandfather heated bricks to keep his feet warm. Now I am crazy to do it, I have the gas and electricity instead. If I heat the bricks only, I jump around and shout "Oh, oh, I'm freezing".'

He himself has always been a progressive. For instance, he was among the first in Savile Row to use side vents on jackets. 'It was fourteen years ago,' he says. 'I was in a bar in Camden Hill, although I am a teetotaller myself, but I was with a young lady and I am drinking the fruit juice, shall we say, when I looked up and there was an overfed youth in front of me, with a centre pleat in his seat.

'Before my eyes, he leaned forward and I have seen the ugliest part of the body – I have visualized the bottom.

'Then I understood. If we had side pleats, the overfed youth could have done the same but his ugliness would not have been seen, his jacket would have moved with his body. I saw it all. I was inspired.' And so he was: the side vent caught on. Bugger-bafflers, they were called, and they've been fashionable ever since.

Understandably, Stanbury is cagey about his firm's finances but, with carpeting like moss and infinities of mahogany and red leather, one senses no poverty. In fact, the problem is less in attracting customers than in finding new apprentices: 'It takes five years to train,' says Stanbury. 'When I was young, tailors were everywhere but now they won't wait. They don't want the career, just money.'

It is hard to blame them. Even after apprenticeship, tailoring remains a very harsh trade. Occasionally, as with Eric Joy or Stanbury himself, one may work his way up and finish up with his own firm. But that's very rare and the ordinary working tailor scuffles – £25 a week is pretty good going and, increasingly, the pressure leads to skimping. 'Standards are falling off badly,' says Joy. 'In 1950, a coatmaker would get about £13 for two coats; now he gets £15 for one and the workmanship is about a third less.'

Presumably, the shortage of workmen will eventually kill bespoke off. There'll probably always be a certain clientele left but the labour must dry up in time. For another generation, perhaps for two, it will limp along, because tailoring has been very much a family skill, handed down through generations, and the tradition dies hard. In time, however, it must

collapse. By the end of the century, it may be almost extinct.

Other branches of the trade, like hosiery and hatting and shoemaking, have much the same problem, though to greater or lesser degrees. Out of all of them, the best off are probably the shirt-makers, because the work involved is less irksome and may be done by women; but, even here, the balance is delicate.

Harvie & Hudson are among the most solid of Jermyn Street companies, on a par with Turnbull & Asser, New & Lingwood and, in Clifford Street, best of all, Edouard & Butler. They charge £8 to £10 for a hand-made shirt and over half their custom is American. As long as the tourists keep coming, they're safe; but if they were ever forced to rely on English trade alone, they'd sink straightaway. 'When we started, after the war, our custom was top-class: gentlemen, clubmen and the like,' says Jeffrey Harvey, a co-partner. 'But that's all gone now, isn't it? The gentry is dead.'

The most archaic of hand-made trades, and also the most stricken, is shoemaking. Before the First World War, there were more than thirty firms in the West End alone. Now there are only four or five left, of which the most august is John Lobbs in St James's and the nicest is Cleverley, who works in a basement in Cork Street.

In fact, there are two Cleverleys: a younger one, a nephew, who goes to his customers' houses and fits them while they recline at their ease; and the uncle, the maestro, who makes probably the best shoes still made.

His basement is a hovel, a burrow, with its walls covered by balsa-wood shoetrees and only the dimmest light. Cleverley himself is a long and skinny old man, in a white apron, and he is not optimistic. 'In four or five years, you won't get hand-made shoes any more, you won't get the craftsmanship. In the last year, I've lost three of my best men. One was seventy-five, another was seventy-three and I can't replace them.'

He is not experimental: 'I wouldn't lower myself. The shoes today are agricultural, clumsy; they're not what I'd call a West End shoe.' So most of his shoes are made from black calf, as they have always been, and have laces and flat heels and

an unfancy shape, footlike. But they are of marvellous lightness and pliancy, and they wear almost forever. They cost around £30 a pair but, if you take good care of them, they'll last unscathed for fifteen years.

Each pair is a minor epic, composed in four stages: first the last-maker, who wood-sculpts the shape of the foot; second the pattern-clipper, who cuts out the leather; third the shoe-closer, who puts the various pieces together, ready for stitching; and fourth the shoemaker himself, who may get through two or three pairs in a week but is paid only £7 a time.

The results are as perfect as any shoe could be, both technically and aesthetically and, considering their lifespan, they're hardly even expensive. 'Makes no difference,' says Cleverley. 'They may be beautiful but they're finished, or soon will be. Everything is gone cockeyed now.'

So it ends, and so it should. It is romantic enough, Clifford Street and Dover Street and Jermyn Street, on sunlit June mornings: the cravats and Macclesfield silk squares in the windows of Edouard & Butler; the hush and protection at Kilgour French, with tailors like bishops; the dying light in Cleverley's basement. All of this is true. But then, in attics and small back rooms, there are also men short-sighted as mules, living on £15 a week. 'Gentlemen are quite all right,' says Eric Joy. 'But not when you're half-starved.'

24

Conclusion

While I was writing this book, I went to Manchester for a couple of days and stood around on street corners, taking in the clothes of every man as he passed. Being based in London, I'd realized how easy it was to lose proportion, to see menswear purely in terms of Chelsea and the chic magazines, and I wanted to see how much had really changed.

Obviously, there was nothing scientific in this; I was curious, that's all. I ignored all the obvious extremes, of class and age and taste, not being concerned with trendy teenagers or Fab Gear fashion, and I concentrated on the bulk – what one might call the middle Englishman.

And what *had* changed? The short answer is quite a lot. About half the men that passed me were wearing slimmer trousers, rather more fitted suits than they would have done ten years before; about one in four used colour – a patterned tie, a bright shirt; and about one in ten was decidedly dressy, clearly went to trouble.

But actual changes in style interested me only secondarily. What I was really after was the redevelopment in the Englishman's self-image, his public personality, as expressed through his dress. Before the war, clothes had said *I am English, and a gentleman*: what did they say now?

This answer was more complex. For a start, it was plain that older men had moved very little. If their taste had been formed by 1939, that is to say if they were now in their mid-forties or over, their message remained essentially the same. They wanted to be respectable, discreet, unseen. If they wore a brighter tie, it was only because brighter ties were now accepted universally, did not disrupt one's anonymity.

Among younger men, however, there had been a shift,

although hardly a revolution, in Carnaby Street or high-fashion sense. They still didn't express themselves individually, they were still unsexual and inconspicuous. Their clothes still said, *I am an ordinary man.* They still conformed to an overall pattern.

But the pattern itself was new, and what had happened, crudely, was that clothes had become amoral. They were no longer bothered with standards of behaviour, or with reliability, or with knowing one's place. They didn't say *I can be trusted,* as they used to. Instead, they said simply *I am, or I can be, a success.*

Predictably, the younger the man, the more this showed and it was only fully realized among the twenties and under. Still, weaker or stronger, the same atmosphere seemed to permeate through most men not yet in their forties. In intent at least, their clothes gave off efficiency and push, and allowed for no predestined status. They were not classless in the sense that you couldn't guess where the wearer came from or roughly how much he earned; they were classless in that you couldn't guess where he thought he'd end up. Unless you were truly working-class, meaning that you laboured with your hands and muscles, you no longer wore your job in your uniform.

After three days, I was satisfied. I felt that I'd understood the adjustments tolerably well, and, smug, I prepared to leave. But then, almost as an afterthought, I flashed upon something much more basic: Englishmen no longer dressed as Englishmen.

It wasn't that they looked like anyone else. They did not ape the French or Germans or Americans; if they'd gone abroad, they'd have been instantly recognizable. But it was no longer an issue. Before the war, it had been the basis of all men's clothes, *I Am English,* and it had produced all the secondary characteristics, like the sense of tradition and attempted dignity. It had been a protection, and now the protection was gone. In present-day uniforms, what had been assertiveness had become mere acceptance, saying *I live in England, therefore I wear its clothes*; no more than that.

This seemed to me the crux, the most basic point of all that had happened to male costume since the war. On the surface, there had been a liberation but that was not so – there had only been a substitution of one discipline for another. Before the war, there had been Englishness, and the securities that Englishness implied. Now Englishness counted much less and the securities were gone. Accordingly, clothes were no longer expressions of stability. Once they had spoken of acceptance, of knowing one's place; in 1970, they spoke mostly of self-improvement.

In Manchester, for instance, I asked questions, wanting to know what men's clothes meant to them, at a conscious level. Predictably, in nine cases out of ten, the answers were scrambled and unhelpful; but just once, I got a response that seemed to sum up all the previous stumblings. In a pub, I met a research chemist, thirty-one-years old, who was married and had two children and earned around £40 a week. He didn't follow fashion but owned seven suits, all bought at Burtons, and chose them with care. He thought that they mattered, not as objects but symbolically, and each purchase was a major event. 'When I buy a new suit,' he said, 'it's almost like getting promotion.'

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